

Vanities: Three Really Stupid Girls Win My Heart

by Joel MEGGS

Vanities is about three valley girls growing up in the sixties and early seventies. It is a three-act play, which begins with the girls in high school, moves on to their college years, and concludes with a tea party after they've split up and gone on with their lives. It's a comedy that draws all of its laughs from two of the three characters: Joanne, who represents mid-western values of family and conservatism, and Kathy, who is the complete opposite and sleeps with every guy she meets and has no intention of starting a family. The third character, Mary, is harder to describe. She is more withdrawn and kind of depressed (I gathered).

So this is a play about three cheerleaders that have little in common with one another except that

they're all bubbleheads growing up amidst the changes of the sixties. Joanne rebels against the liberation of the sexual revolution, feminism, and drugs, Kathy embraces and flaunts it, and somewhere in the middle is Mary.

Most of the laughs in the play come from Kathy's overt sexuality, Joanne's reactionary responses to Kathy and her lifestyle, and from the general stupidity of all the characters, who, in a time of increased political consciousness, remain vapid, self-centred and myopic.

I didn't find the play all that funny; most of the jokes were pretty obvious, and you could see them coming a mile a way. However, I did find the last scene extremely depressing. I really did. The three girls talk about how their lives turned out, and it

becomes increasingly obvious that not only do they have nothing in common, they never did.

The fact that I found it so depressing suggests just how well acted *Vanities* was. While the play itself is nothing special, the three actors did an outstanding job with what little they had to work with. What I found to be the most compelling aspect of the play was the relationship between characters with conflicting personas. Each actor played up her character's strengths throughout the first two acts, setting the stage for the crucial final act. Joanne was well performed by Stephanie McCormick, who played the character as a ditzy traditionalist who compensates for her prudishness with mindless chitchat and girlish laughter, occasionally letting her pent-up hostilities fly. Miranda Tremere assumed the role of Mary convincingly, provoking Joanne with her overly-sexually liberated

manner and her unconventional take on women's lib.

Jessica Doyle, who plays Kathy, takes a subsidiary role in the first two acts; her role is not that well defined for those scenes, as her dialogue is kind of awkward. It's not clear where she fits. But in the third act, she steps up and assumes the most pivotal role, that of mediator and conciliator, as all three characters wrestle with the meaning of their lives and their relationship up to that point. Her character remains somewhat mysterious even at the conclusion of the play. It is not clear why she has invited her friends to a tea party after several years of estrangement; she seems like she wants some kind of closure, which in a way she gets.

I guess the point of the play is that you can't know who you are until you know what you want. And you can't know what you want until you get the chance to go and get it. And if the women's liberation movement is partially about women's freedom of choice, then once these three characters are afforded the chance to choose their lifestyles, they become more defined and more incompatible with one another. Or something. Anyway, it had some very strong acting. McCormick's cheerleading is worth mentioning, too.

In the program, Little Voices Theatre Productions is said to have been "created as a means through which to run professional-looking theatre productions in a community theatre setting." This show certainly fulfilled that mandate. The production side of *Vanities* was very well done - great costumes, great sets, great sound. And it's no wonder; for the three actors on stage, there are eight people listed in the program as working backstage, plus Tremere who is the associate producer as well as an actor. Director Lisa Hennessey pulled off a very strong show with a fairly weak script. It's just a shame more people didn't get a chance to see it, but I see big things for the Little Voices troop in the future.

Joel's Rant

Did you know that *The Guardian* doesn't review community theatre? Apparently, for some time now, the Charlottetown paper has made a policy of not reviewing any community based theatre productions. The rationale is, it is not doing community theatre any favours to give bad reviews, and it is bad journalism to only give good reviews, so they avoid them altogether.

Which is too bad, because it is good to get feedback—the sort of constructive criticism (or praise) that can help budding actors in future endeavours. *The Buzz* makes an effort to review community theatre, but usually the reviews are brief and vague. I certainly wouldn't call them real reviews in *The New York Times* sense.

Not that I'm saying the reviews found within these pages are of that calibre, but at least we try to give an opinion. Just as I have tried to give a fair and useful review of *Vanities*.

But while I have your attention, I'd like to say something about lack of attendance at community theatre. I took in the Saturday night showing of *Vanities*, and the Carrefour was far from capacity. Saturday night of last week: think of what you were doing. The hockey game was the Leafs at Edmonton. Empire Theatres had *Snow Dogs* and *Orange County*. One would think that the Little Voices Theatre troop could lure more than the thirty or forty people who showed.

It's ridiculous. What are people doing that they can't go out to this stuff? It's indicative of Charlottetown's lack of community spirit, and it's the reason that the PEI Senators went under and why we'll never lure a Quebec-major team. Oh sure, when dumb-ass Bryan Adams shows up, you can't get near the auditorium, but the consensus seems to be, if it's home-grown, it's not worth leaving the house for.

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