

THE VIEW FROM THE BALCONY

It is a world where children shuttle back and forth each weekend like pieces in a chess game; where your next date is probably a high-heel fetishist, if he's not lurking near the soup in your local A & P; where marriage is a futile battle fought with Wok cords and curling rods; where the best available advice for a failing relationship is contained in *A Hundred and Twenty-Five Positions* and the survival manual may well be Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. In short, it is our world, where "family" and "partnership" seem threadbare and hopeless, and divorce is so much the norm that it is virtually a cliché.

Oliver Hailey's *Father's Day* looks beneath the clichéd veneer of the urban divorced culture to find the enduring reality of human pain and aloneness and longing for unity. The first act of the play is devoted to three women, one recently divorced, struggling mightily in three very different ways to come to terms with that aloneness and abandonment, and to preserve their own dignity and sense of themselves: Marian, whose recourse is the idea of herself as a princess whom her husband will always love above all others; Louise, whose weapons are a harsh realism and a wonderfully obscene wit to ward off pain by striking first; and Estelle, the neophyte, clinging to a beatified image of the past and a wispy hope for reunion — the orphan in us all, looking for home. As the older women train Estelle in the fine art of living divorced, it becomes clear that in all their self-delusion and verbal combat, there is something of real heroism and love for each other — in fact, something of sisterhood.

When the men return in Act II from their Father's Day outing with the kids, the parallel is apparent: the wise and generous Tom and Richard are likewise coaching the naive and obtuse Harold through the tricky changes of divorced life. Yet their ex-wives are clearly fighting their ways through a kind of aloneness the men will never know. As Tom puts it, "That's the way it is, honey — Cincinnati, New York, Sioux City — the man wins, the woman loses. That's divorce." The world accommodates itself quite readily to these men alone (but never alone for long), while the women look out from that urban balcony on a hostile world ready to rob them of the resources they fight to preserve. Each of them takes a step, makes a wrenching sacrifice by the end of the play, which finds them on the balcony again, together and alone, like Chekhov's three sisters, dreaming of a Moscow of the heart. Beyond their indomitable selves, they have at least each other to mitigate a world in which, as Louise says, every day is Father's Day.

Gail Griffin
Festival Dramaturge

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

Light Board Operator	Melinda Brady
Sound Board Operator	Burgess Ekman
Costume Crew	Laura Haynes Anna Photinos Ann Ver Wiebe
Wardrobe Crew	Laura Haynes
Set Crew	Melinda Brady Cathie Laurent Anna Photinos Peter Smith

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Hilberry Theatre
Kalamazoo Civic Players
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