

ANNE a new play by Jessica Durlacher and Leon de Winter

This play was adapted for American audiences by Nick Blaemire from a translation by Susan Massotty. It is advertised as a “new play that reframes the Anne Frank Story on her 90th birthday”. It opens in a Parisian sidewalk café where Anne has a chance encounter with a wealthy publisher (Timothy P. Brown). One wonders if anybody is buying this? Or should it remain a romantic mystery, a la Romeo and Juliet where we brace for a sad ending but somehow hope that dumb Friar Lawrence had unveiled his plan to both the young lovers. Isn't there a possibility that Anne did somehow escape and is a doting grandma now? Or a famous author writing under a pseudonym? You've read her book, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, seen the movie etc. but we still wonder what this bright child could have achieved in her precocious wisdom, positive attitude and love of humanity. Presidential aspirations? Why not?

The production is well done in a handsome venue, the Museum of Tolerance's Peltz Theatre and directed with care by Eve Brandstein, set by Desma Murphy. Scene by scene brings us closer into the mindset of the two Jewish families, Frank and van Pels, that are thrown together in an attic in Amsterdam. They're hiding from the invading Nazi forces under stressful conditions. Otto Frank, the pater familias (Rob Brownstein) a former successful businessman, is adored by Anne and possesses the ideal combination of charm and gravitas. Edith Frank, Anne's not too beloved mother is Andrea Gwynnel and the older, more reserved sister Margot, is Marnina Schon. In the van Pels Family, we have mom, (Mary Gordon Murray) a bit of a prima donna, dad (Aylam Orian) and their handsome, young son Peter van Pels (Kevin Matsumoto), Anne's heartthrob and first love, who awakens her inner romantic. A single gent, the annoying Mr. Pfeffer Tony DeCarlo is another occupant who invades Anne's space and vice versa. They all perform flawlessly. We briefly meet Miep Gies, the Frank's former, faithful maid (Murray, double cast), the second heroine of this story, who found Anne's manuscripts and made sure the world will love and cherish her long after her death. As for our star, Anne (Ava Lalezarzadeh), is the ideal Anne, impulsive, high spirited and bursting with joie de vivre. Her voice would be audible at the top balcony of Disney Hall. She never kvetches about the primitive toilet facilities, nor the limited sleeping arrangements. No one has to fear an unwanted pregnancy here, they are bedded head to head and toe to toe. They are afraid of discovery and of the frequent night time bombardments (sound and lighting by Derek Christiansen and Ian James, respectively). Even if you are quite familiar with this tale, come and bring a young person who has yet to learn about a child of the Holocaust and how she coped with no freedom and no privacy nor hope for a beautiful future – which we all take for granted.

Museum of Tolerance, Peltz Theatre, 9786 W. Pico Blvd. Los Angeles 90035. No intermission. Sundays 3 & 7pm, Monday 8 pm. \$40, seniors \$25, Students \$20. Discounted Family Packs available as well as theatre/museum pkg. Free parking in building's underground garage. (310)772-2505 or www.museumoftolerance.com ends 7/22/19

Note: Take advantage of your performance date and allow time to visit the internationally famous Museum of Tolerance. They feature talks by surviving Holocaust men and women, and work to promote social justice for everybody. In conjunction with “Anne” the play, there is currently an exhibit showing personal, family photos, memorabilia, multimedia displays etc. intelligently curated. Narrated by actress Hailee Steinfeld. Check it out prior or after the performance Info: (310) 553-8403

REVIEW BY INGRID WILMOT