

DRAMA-LOGUE

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HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

THEATRE REVIEWS

Duet for One

REVIEWED BY VIOLA HEGYI SWISHER

Produced by Laura Zucker at the Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys; (818) 780-2240. Opened Feb. 16; plays Thurs.-Sat., 8; Sun., 3; ends March 31.

The ever-controversial subject of psychiatry gets a deep-felt, intelligent open airing in Tom Kempinski's *Duet for One*, based on a case history rooted in real life. Highlighted and polished for theatre, the drama gains from Ron Satlof's estimably modulated direction.

So many questions. So many answers. All arguable. Here we have Linda Kelsley as one Stephanie Abrahams, a renowned concert violinist stricken with an irreversible polysyllabic disease for which no known cure exists. The temporarily alleviative pills prescribed for her have side effects ranging from irritating to formidable. How Stephanie is to carry on for the rest of her waning life is the problem.

She may soon lose her muscular power of locomotion to the electric wheelchair she now occupies by choice. She may lose the husband who adored her art. She can copulate with the sexy handyman. She has no desire to teach young no-talents. She wants no children. She can berate the entire medical profession for its inadequacy and psychiatrist Feldman for his \$150 fee for every session that tears her apart without putting her together again. Kelsley's Stephanie breaks the heart, challenges the mind and arouses sizzling admiration.

Composed, controlled, every inch the devoted healer, Allan Miller as Dr. Feldman represents the best of the psychiatric profession. Not because he deals in any magic, not because he knows all the answers—or even all the questions—the good doctor plies his trade successfully. He accepts life and tries as best he can to help his patients do so too. To this end, he tries to help them uncover feelings that begin with their earliest memories and hide in all sorts of guises as the years file by. But he's not all the gentle professional, the kindly spinner of fairytales for the misbegotten. Miller blasts off with explosively released power in the penultimate scene which he makes his own. It should have been the final scene of the evening.

Christopher M. Idoine designed an office set any psychiatrist would be pleased to occupy and Joseph N. Tawil designed unobtrusive but interesting lighting. Martha Burke's costumes for Stephanie's sessions are first rate and Jerry Sider's sound reminds the audience this is the story of a musician.



ED KRIEGER

Linda Kelsley and Allan Miller in 'Duet for One' by Tom Kempinski