



WAITING FOR THE SPARK

REVIEWED BY COLIN DOUGLAS

Those who have been married for several years or been involved in a loving, long term relationship will find this tender drama a play that speaks volumes. It begins as Kate, a mature woman pacing around the living room of her home, contemplates her future. She's trying to decide whether or not to go through with a date she's made to walk through the Botanic Gardens with a gentleman caller. He's due to arrive at any moment and she's uncomfortable going out. She debates the pros and cons of her decision with Jake who, we eventually learn, is actually the ghost or the memory of her deceased husband. Kate is a widow simply trying to decide whether or not it's time for her, as Thornton Wilder put it, to rejoin the human race.

Todd Logan's one-act flips seamlessly between the present and the past. We learn more about Kate, her long garden relationship with Jake over the years, and how the events from the past affects the present and future. This isn't, as might be assumed from the subject matter, a sad or depressing play about death and dying. It's a play about life, about coping with the comedy and tragedy of living; it's a drama laced with wit and humor, insight and wisdom. This little gem definitely shines brightly all on its own; but the play would also meld nicely as part of a longer program of one-acts about marriage and communication.

The production is directed with care and sharp attention to detail by Ann Filmer, Artistic Director of Berwyn's acclaimed 16th Street Theater. Modestly staged, this production isn't concerned with fancy sets and costumes, special lighting effects and pyrotechnics. It's a story that's simply about two people, the love and communication between them and the eternal bond they'll always share. It lands with honesty smack dab in the laps of every audience member. In its simplicity and earnestness, Logan's characters and words cut to the quick.

Prolific stage, film and TV actors James Leaming and Carmen Roman play Jake and Kate with all the humanity and sincerity of a couple who are comfortable, both with themselves and each other. They bring strength, honesty and a great deal of vulnerability to their roles, along with moments of bittersweet sadness, anger and humor. It's hard to imagine a finer pair of actors to inhabit these roles and Chicagoland is fortunate for this opportunity to see them in this play.

Jake says he waited and eventually found that certain spark in Kate. That's what initially drew him to her. But Kate's life isn't over. And while he wants her to remember and treasure what they had together, Jake also wants Kate to continue searching for someone else who'll bring that kind of spark back to her life. This is a play about love, about remembering and about working through grief and finding the joy in living. It's quite simply a little jewel that shines in the night. *Highly Recommended*