



Italian American Reconciliation

by Colleen Sproull -February 3, 2013



On a snowy night, I longed to stay inside and hibernate, but I braved the bad drivers and salt trucks to trek to 1st Stage for John Patrick Shanley's *Italian American Reconciliation*. I'm so glad I did, because **this was the ultimate theatre-going experience.**



With clever direction by Michael Chamberlin, 1st Stage's production has it all – a knock-out set by JD Madsen you've got to see, stylish costumes by LeVonne Lindsay, great music and sound by Derek V. Knoderer, and Lighting Designer Brian S. Allard sets a very enticing mood. I've still got "Sway" stuck in my head and have a strange desire to dance the Cha-Cha....

The acting of the talented cast is superb – a slice of life. The well-knit cast of brilliant actors include Matt Dewberry (Huey), Drew Kopas (Aldo), Anne Nottage (Janice), Suzanne Richard (Aunt May), and Dani Stoller (Teresa). Fully-developed, well lived-in characters flourish onstage with exciting arguments, emotional journeys (sometimes breakdowns), and thoughtful ponderings on life about men and women, and why people are the way they are. Dewberry has so many poignant moments where his connection and specific memories spring to life as Huey and takes us on a real journey. Kopas brings maximum energy to Aldo's comical character, he's smart and cunning and engages the audience from the first moment. Nottage exudes sensuality as Janice and I found myself nervously on the edge of my seat pondering what she'd do next. Richard owns the space as a supportive, wise, funny Aunt May, a real pleasure to watch. Stoller has such a strong emotional connection and expresses Teresa's plight with such vigor and honesty.

I was really impressed by everyone's honest, real connections to the characters and each other. It was thrilling to experience.

Fully-developed, well lived-in characters flourish onstage with exciting arguments, emotional journeys (sometimes breakdowns), and thoughtful ponderings on life about men and women, and why people are the way they are. Can we blame our problems on our fathers, or is it time to take ownership of our own lives? Can we continue in a pattern of despair and denial – or will we confront our issues and move on successfully, restfully, and hopefully – happily?

What works well in this beautifully crafted play was how Shanley's voice echoes throughout the play, whether it's through Aunt May's advice like, "You gotta give up your fear of women as a race," or as characters make realizations about themselves and their relationships, like Aldo's, "The only success is to be able to love."

Huey and Aldo are two bros who would literally be willing to take a bullet for each other. Huey asks for Aldo's help as he plans to dump his perfect girlfriend Teresa in pursuit of his abusive ex-wife Janice. Needless to say, events transpire in this deep "romantic" comedy. As an audience member, I rooted for each character because of their very human thoughts and actions as they poured their hearts out about the past, full of regrets and real-life experiences, and the future full of ambitions and desires.



1st Stage's production is so full of energy and urgency. There are intensely intimate scenes between these characters who mean so much to each other. I **had** to know what was going to happen. And when the actors move and get comfortable on the set, it just makes this story even more real and that much more enjoyable.

You absolutely must go see 1st Stage's enjoyable *Italian American Reconciliation!*

Running Time: Two hours, with one 15 minute intermission.