

DOUBT

A drama by John Patrick Shanley

Virginia Stage Company

Sept. 18 - Oct. 7, 2007

For tickets: VSC Box Office (757)627 1234 or Ticketmaster (757)671-8100

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

If you're hungry for good, somewhat old-fashioned theatre that leaves you spellbound, make plans immediately to see DOUBT. This drama, with ample servings of laughter as well, is ninety minutes of theatrical ambrosia.

Sister Aloysius Beauvier, the principal of a Roman Catholic School in the Bronx, has a disturbing, lingering feeling about the relationship of Father Flynn with a twelve year old black male student. In a beautifully defined and restrained performance, Susan Pellegrino, paints a masterpiece of a starched, traditionalist nun. She is tormented by the possible immorality of the congenial fun loving priest., if her intuition is correct. Joe Hickey has the right intelligent, authoritative approach and charismatic behavior for the Father who admits that if necessary he makes up stories in his sermons..He coaches basketball with macho intensity and likes to keep his finger nails long. He wants to be thought of as one of the family by the community, to take the kids out for ice cream, he says at one point. Her thoughts about teaching and the community are entirely different from his.

In her determination to obtain facts and information to deal with her perceived crisis of evil, she summons the eighth grade teacher, Sister James. Stephanie Cozart pleasantly aptures the touching virginal innocence of this young nun. She is passionate about teaching, and like Father Flynn, she disagrees with Sister Aloysius and is not afraid to defend herself. She does have potentially damaging evidence about the priest, if it is true. Before confronting Father Flynn, the principal talks with the boy's mother most aptly and movingly performed by Kim Stauton. Because her son is "different" from normal boys, his father beats him.and the mother feels that if indeed he is "abnormal" he is in a safe place with Father Flynn as a friend.

All these "ifs", of course lead to doubt about every thing. In this finely crafted play, John Shanley brings up enough uncertainties and variations of events to confound Sherlock Holmes. But, Mr. Shanley isn't just playing with our detective skills as a murder mystery does. He is extolling doubt as a virtue. In a program note he says that doubt requires more courage than conviction. At the end of the play, Sister Aloysius is reduced to tears. Is it because of the fate of Father Flynn, the unheeding hierarchy of the Church or the indifference of God?

Much credit for this perfectly modulated performance must go to director Chris Hanna who guides this talented cast of four with subtle just right control. Troy Hourie's set is a little sterile and too clean and new looking. Or is that an intended statement? I'm not sure. I am absolutely certain about one point. You must see this play. There's no doubt in my mind about that..

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.