

SIX DANCE LESSONS IN SIX WEEKS by Richard Alfieri
Theatre Too

*REVIEWED 08-31/09

REVIEWED BY Matt Gunther
ASSOCIATE THEATER CRITIC for John Garcia's THE COLUMN

SIX DANCE LESSONS IN SIX WEEKS

From the time Lily opens her door to let him in; Michael pulls us into his world of semi-insanity. As soon as his first words burst from his lips there's the feeling that we're in for a ride – that all we can do is strap ourselves in, hang on, and see where this baby takes us.

Theatre Too's Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks is a remarkably fun play about two people with desperate needs who find fulfillment in the least likely place. It's big, strong and full of life, but imbued with a compelling intimacy. I found myself laughing a lot and looking forward to each new scene, each new dance and how it was going to play out. It felt like I was watching a new soup being made, boiling on the stove, and each scene was a new vegetable, a new flavor being thrown in, but not just your normal carrots, onions, and potatoes – no, these were wild carrots, wild onions, and wild potatoes, full of flavor and a lot of wild.

Bob Hess is relentless. He brings sass, charm, and energy to the role of Michael, a relocated gay, middle-aged dancer from New York, angry with this place in his life. Mr. Hess plays Michael's cynicism with beautifully controlled venom, steeped in an honesty that is both shocking and riotous.

But a dance is lacking without a partner. Elly Lindsay plays Lily, a widow in her late 60's, a minister's wife, dealing with loneliness and Social Anxiety Disorder. She is excellent. She is abrupt and no nonsense in the beginning scenes, still carrying the minister's wife persona. She is a withering old bitty. But Ms. Lindsay shows us the grace within Lily, and her beauty, as she transforms into a flirtatious young woman of 68.

The choices they made as actors really helped this play move along. It is certainly well written, but they pushed it along. I liked Mr. Hess's choice to listen, absorb, and to think through what she's really saying behind her words as his relationship with Lily grows. It takes us beyond Michael's flamboyant, larger-than-life side and captures the essence of a man coming to terms with his life.

Ms. Lindsay's acting choices were precise when she flirted on the edge of letting go of that protective wall she lives behind as Michael drew her in, as well as the way her countenance changed as she rediscovered herself. She captured well the fear of growing older and becoming invisible, and the child still inside longing to escape.

All of this is made possible through superb direction from Terry Dobson. The pace clips along and there are no slow points in the show., for it is a fast-moving train. I loved the silhouettes in blue and pink at the ends of Act One and Act Two respectively. I thought they captured the growing intimacy between Michel and Lily beautifully.

The choreography by Michael Serrecchia was excellent. He had the actors dancing seamlessly

around and across the stage. The contemporary dance was fun to watch, the swing was energetic, and the waltz beautiful. Finally Jeffery Schmidt's scenic design was warm and inviting.

Bottom line: This is a great show to watch and get lost in.

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SIX DANCE LESSONS IN SIX WEEKS
Theatre Too, 2800 Routh St. , Ste. 168, Dallas , TX 75201
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