

# CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION by Pangdemonium! Productions

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## “Circle Sans Transformation”

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**Reviewer: Isaac Tan**

**Performance: 29 January 2015**

If *Circle Mirror Transformation* is, as Adrian and Tracie Pang put it, a “love letter to the transformative power of theatre,” it is a forgettable epistle that is overindulgent and filled with sweet nothings.

Four characters join an acting class and in the course of going through an assortment of theatre exercises, they reveal their backstories and vulnerabilities.

Naturally, all of them emerge from the class changed — for better or worse.

That is all well and good but playwright Annie Baker uses the acting exercises as a mere device to gouge these secrets and backstories out into the open.

The acting process is a vulnerable one: it allows and asks the actor to discover more about himself/herself. However, any self-respecting acting teacher would manage this process carefully and not overwhelm the students. Moreover, even if the exercises require the actor to reveal something personal, no one — unless duly intoxicated — will risk revealing secrets that may jeopardise his/her personal relationships.

Predictably, the backstories of the characters are the usual crop of failed relationships and bad childhoods with very minor variations. This reviewer would have preferred to observe an actual acting masterclass with believably real people’s drama unfolding (if it comes to that) in the process.

The repetitions of the acting exercises added nothing to the choppy rhythms of the show. Some scenes were far too long and the energy level dipped while others were too fast and truncated whatever that could’ve been developed further.

The actor’s incessant exiting and entering the studio during every scene transition was unnecessary and pointless. However, the cast had chemistry and I enjoy watching them ‘spar’ with one another using side glances, gestures, and whispers that indicate off-studio conversations.

Noteworthy performance include Adrian Pang as the awkward Schultz, Nikki Muller as the enthusiastic Theresa, and Daniel Jenkins as James. Neo Swee Lin did great as Marty, the hippie acting coach and James’ wife. However, her inconsistent accent is distracting. Selma Alkaff gives a good professional debut but she is prone to the occasional overacting.

Certainly, the comic timing and the funny moments in the play were great to behold. The ending also scored some brownie points but all that is just not enough for me.

This show is a little funny, a little touching, and a little poignant. But like sweet nothings casually whispered, they are brief pleasure and nothing more.

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## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

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### **CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION by Pangdemonium! Productions**

29 January – 15 February 2015

DBS Arts Centre

## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

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**Isaac Tan** is a current contributor to The Kent Ridge Common, an NUS publication, and an aspiring poet whose poems have appeared in Symbal, Eunoia Review, Eastlit, and Malaise Journal.