

HELLO GOODBYE by Singapore Repertory Theatre

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“Lovely-Dovey Silliness”

Reviewer: Isaac Tan

Performance: 5 September 2015

The title of this romantic comedy cannot be more literal.

The first act consists of Alex (Shane Mardjuki), a geeky and neurotic memorabilia collector, renting or purchasing the same flat as Juliet (Denise Tan), a bad-tempered hot mess. They fight over who has the lawful right to the flat and end up falling in love. The second act shows the couple on the brink of divorce as they go about bickering over who should get what in an attempt to forestall a final goodbye.

Sounds improbable? Well, it is. Even if one is currently giddy with love, it will take at least half a bottle of champagne for it to appear plausible.

Apart from the paper-thin plot, the play feels like playwright Peter Souter’s exercise in composing witty dialogue. While this reviewer appreciates the wit and word play, they do not contribute much to the plot or draw us in to the characters.

In fact, the dialogue is more suited for a cross-talk skit than a naturalistic comedy. Perhaps, this has to do with the fact that the play is originally conceived for radio and there has been no substantive revision to the script in the transfer to a more visual medium.

As if there are not enough incongruities, we have a rather curious set design by Lucy Osborne. It is a simple kitchen set but what is puzzling are the empty spaces on the stage. It is as if the set was constructed outside of the theatre and fell onto the stage only to realise that someone got the wrong dimensions of the stage.

Despite it seeming like a total disaster, the production is buoyed up by Mardjuki’s and Tan’s performance. Their chemistry and a keen sense of timing bring out the comedy in the lines. In the second act, their ability to deal with the pregnant pauses as the couple tries to make sense of what went wrong creates some tender moments which gives the performance some depth.

Unfortunately, one cannot say the same for David Howard as Leo, Juliet’s ex-boyfriend, and Amanda Tee as Amanda, an auctioneer. Their characters act as convenient relief to the monotony of the bickering couple. If anything, they literally walk on to say hello and a few more lines before leaving the stage.

In the final analysis, *Hello Goodbye* still makes for an amusing night out at the theatre and a much better alternative to Adam Sandler movies.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

HELLO GOODBYE by Singapore Repertory Theatre

2 – 26 September 2015

DBS Arts Centre

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

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.