

The Last Sunday in June -- Subculture Doesn't Mean They're All the Same
by Roxanne Ray

Gay Pride Weekend – the annual celebration that began 22 years ago in 1974 and launched an ever-growing parade in 1977 – continues to expand this year into two parades, on two days, in two different neighborhoods. And with the schism between the two Pride planning committees has come the angst and soul-searching that often follows jubilation – making Repertory Actors Theatre's production of Jonathan Tolins's *The Last Sunday in June* timely with its avalanche of questions about the state of the contemporary gay male community.

Michael (Rob MacGregor) valiantly attempts to focus on his work while his seven-year partner Tom (Austin Farwell) invites an increasingly-large contingent of gay friends over to their Greenwich Village apartment to watch the parade from above. Much posing and flirting ensues as paraders are evaluated, campiness is flung about the stage, and eventually, damaging secrets are revealed. Lesbians are given short shrift in *Last Sunday*, mentioned in passing only to be dismissed from the all-male culture of Michael and Tom's Christopher Street crew. Tom takes on the dual task of trying to dissuade an appropriately awkward and straight-acting former boyfriend, James (Tad Shafer), from marrying a woman as a "glorified roommate," against the backdrop of Tom's own raging Seven-Year-Itch.

Until the "shakedown" of James and his future spouse Susan (played with a nice range of solicitude and strength by Angela DiMarco) following intermission, the play's plot is fairly thin and must rely on the sassiness and camaraderie of the characters to remain interesting. Happily, throughout the first half, ReACT's production, under the direction of Artistic Director David Hsieh, keeps us laughing – with the devoted help of Marc delaCruz and the often impeccably-timed ShawnJ West as the lascivious 20-somethings Joe and Brad. Charles (Dennis Kleinsmith) and Scott (Jadd Davis) round out the cast as, respectively, the wizened elder with actual gay-struggle experience and the hot shirtless hunk who (gasp!) has a brain too. The performance of everyday life becomes a *raison d'être* for these parade-watchers, to the extent that they imagine their Gay Pride day as "another gay play" – a conceit by the playwright that mostly works thanks to the heightened bursts of center-stage posturing created through Hsieh's direction.

But *Last Sunday's* spine is the relationship between Michael and Tom, who endlessly bombard us with the disillusionment of their gay dreams under the scrutiny of issues

ranging from monogamy, fidelity, moving to the suburbs, “getting your needs met,” and the gay “rules” about who is supposedly cute enough or young enough to date whom. MacGregor and Farwell have clearly labored to develop the spontaneous comfort of a couple domestically entangled for so many years, complete with knowing glances at every joke, or little touches at key moments. And however intentionally or not, MacGregor’s sunburned face and neck complemented Michael’s perpetual embarrassment at the unstoppable flaming behavior of Tom’s cohorts. The tension between Michael and Tom repeatedly highlights the challenges of relating to one’s own (sub)culture: of trying to fit in and failing miserably, or deciding to revel in it, warts and all.

The design team pulled together in its drive toward a detailed realism, with the mild and matching interior colors well-suited to a dignified lawyer and teacher intent on moving to Nyack and attending dinner nights with straight couples. Maurice Smith’s soundtrack of showtunes before curtain and at intermission echoed and augmented the many vocalizings of the ensemble – as well as the household’s pet blender. Opening night’s performance wasn’t perfect: some of the jokes fell flat, and a few of the play’s insightful lines lacked punch. A lack of stage-right lighting often left Brad in the shadows of his fellow characters. But these were small failures compared to the strength of the ensemble’s connections and the rapport between Michael and Tom. My only true pout resulted from the realization that the cute little disco ball hanging above the set wasn’t ever actually going to be used. The many unanswered questions about how to build a good life in *The Last Sunday in June* won’t put a spring in your step on your way out the door to one of Seattle’s Pride parades, but it does offer a reminder that home requires more than color-coordinated furniture.

Last Sunday in June: ReACT Theatre, June 9 – July 2, 2006. Theatre Off Jackson, 409 7th Avenue S, Seattle. Tickets and info: **(206) 364-3283** ext. 2.