

After Ashley

Inreview ★★★★★ 3.5 out of 5 stars - 'Sweet Stuff'

Dragon Theatre

Directed by Dale Albright

Starring Sean Gilvary, Dale Albright, Meredith Hagedorn, Caitlyn Tella, Tim Garcia, and Evan Michael Schumacher

www.dragonproductions.net



Sean Gilvary in 'After Ashley' at Dragon Productions Theatre.

After the hoopla, ribbon-cutting, and political accolades, the Dragon got down to work on Friday night and brought us a new drama at their brand new venue in Redwood City. Combining elements of comedy and psychological thriller, this work was typical of the smart theatre that the Dragon offers. While other works about reality TV are as irritating as the subject they try to skewer, *After Ashley* didn't insult the audience's intelligence.

As Ashley, Meredith Hagedorn is the veritable Everywoman. However, she's not the sanitized Everywoman you get in freshman lit, but one who unravels even faster than she gets it together. The physicality of her persona reveals everything. Although we only see her for the briefest of moments after she's killed off in Act I, her presence dominates the entire production.

As Justin Hammond, Ashley's surviving son, Sean Hillary brings echoes of Mikal Gilmore's book "Shot in the Heart," in which Gilmore complains about the girls that came on to him because he was the brother of an executed murderer. Acutely conscious of being manipulated by others, this sullen figure who never gets too far from the bottle is the most dynamic and likeable member of the cast.

As Alden, Dale Albright plays the sort of self-serving, equivocating liberal that's easy to dislike. Rush Limbaugh would have a blast with this character. However, Albright's too smart to make Alden a completely two-dimensional bleeding heart. Every now and then, a flicker of what might be self knowledge passes across his face and suggests that his well modulated, oh-so-safe politics might fracture.

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Catlyn Tella as goth girl Julie Bell, Evan Michael Schumacher as TV producer David Gavin, and Tim Garcia as oleaginous porn director Roderick Lord round out the cast. Together they take the audience in a two act traversal that brings its own unusual redemption. The unlikely second act is stronger than the first, as its unexpected twists raise the suspense and quicken the pace.

The Dragon's new venue marks a return to intelligent theatre at reasonable prices on the Peninsula.

After Ashley was the perfect production to kick off the season at the Dragon Theatre's new venue in Redwood City. The impeccable eye of artistic director and founder Meredith Hagedorn didn't get left in Palo Alto or lost with the incessant whirlwind of fundraising that made this place possible.

The Dragon's new venue marks a return to intelligent theatre at reasonable prices on the Peninsula. Whereas other theatres play it safe and focus on known works that will reliably bring out audiences, the Dragon focuses largely on works that you won't catch at other venues.

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This new venue is perfectly situated. Unlike the old Dragon, located on the very edge of downtown staring out at the train tracks, their new venue opens up straight onto the bustling downtown. At once it feels more a part of where it belongs – in the community.

After Ashley runs through February 17th and is well worth taking in.

Photo Credit: James Kasyan

Cy Ashley Webb

Cy spent the '80's as a bench scientist, the tech boom doing intellectual property law, and the first decade of the millennium, aspiring to be the world's oldest grad student at Stanford where she is interested in political martyrdom. Presently, she enjoys writing for Stark Insider and the SF Examiner, hanging out at Palo Alto Children's Theatre, and participating in various political activities. Democracy is not a spectator sport! Cy is a SFBATCC member. Follow [@StarkInsider](#)

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