

# Dragon Theatre takes on big pharma with 'Rx' - - San Mateo Daily Journal



## **Lance Huntley**

*Janine Evans and Evan Michael Schumacher star in 'Rx.'*

Depressed by your job? There might be a pill for that, according to "Rx" by Kate Fodor, being presented by Dragon Theatre in downtown Redwood City.

Meena (Janine Evans) is managing editor for the piggery section of American Cattle and Swine magazine. When she hears that a big pharmaceutical company is looking for participants in a trial study of a drug for workplace depression, she eagerly volunteers.

She has been so depressed by her job and her boss, Simon (Brian Flegel), that she often retreats to cry in a rarely patronized section of a nearby department store. That's where she encounters an upbeat older widow, Frances (Sandy Pardini Cashmark), who is creating a bucket list for whatever time she has left.

The doctor seeing Meena through the drug trial is Phil (Keith C. Marshall). He's not overly enamored of his job either, given its silly corporate rules administered by his chirpy boss, Allison (Meredith Hagedorn).

Following the time-honored plot of boy meets girl, boy and girl fall in love, Phil and

Meena become romantically involved.

For one thing, he's impressed that she has written a book of prose poetry that has been published. Going further with the plot scenario, boy loses girl, but they get together at the end.

Fodor's contemporary play nicely skewers big pharma, the corporate mentality, the increasing dependence on pills to cure what ails us and high medical costs.

In one revealing scene, Phil tells Meena that the experimental drug, SP-925, will probably be available only to those who can afford it.

Director Jeanie K. Smith has assembled a likable group of actors. However, she doesn't overcome its episodic nature, which involves frequent blackouts for quick scene changes on Christopher Decker's set..

Smith also allows some overacting, especially by Evan Michael Schumacher as Richard, who's preparing the ad campaign for SP-925, and as Ed, the inept physician who's supposedly developing a drug for heartbreak. Hagedorn also veers close to caricature as Phil's boss.

The play could benefit from some trimming. It spends too much time on Phil's fascination with Meena's poetry and his resultant fascination with feet. The second act sometimes meanders.

Still, there are some nicely comic lines that are funny because they ring true.

"Rx" continues at Dragon Theatre, 2120 Broadway, Redwood City, through Feb. 9. For tickets and information call (650) 493-2006 or visit [www.dragonproductions.net](http://www.dragonproductions.net).