

## The Little Dog Laughed: Great theater in small packages



From left to right: (Mitchell) William Giammona - (Diane) Jennifer Lucas - (Alex) Henry Robert Nolin Photo by James Kasyan

**Avenue Theatre** in Mountain View seats only about 45 people, but I saw an incredibly moving production of *Death of a Salesman* there. The small **Renegade Theatre Experiment** produced *9 Circles* at the Hoover Theater in San Jose and the entire audience was not only moved to tears, but most of us could barely look at the actors on stage, we were so moved by what was going on. And now I've seen the fabulous (and tiny) Dragon Productions Theatre where I had the pleasure of viewing 4 incredible actors put on an hilarious and moving show.

I could not wait to see *The Little Dog Laughed* because I had heard that the playwright was also the screenwriter for "To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar" which, sadly, might be the only drag queen road trip film available on Netflix. What my expectations received was a thought provoking comedy, and an adult show about love and sex and ambition, and all the problems that arise when you combine the three.

Mitchell Green is a small film star who could hit it big with one juicy role. Diane is his lesbian best friend and agent who plays Mitchell's girlfriend for the public. Yes, leading man Mitchell is gay, but because the film going public won't accept an openly gay man in straight romantic roles, he's forced to hire "rent-a-boys" (young looking but adult

My guest and I had the best time last night at **Dragon Productions Theatre Company** in Palo Alto. Yes, even more fun than I had at the opera (review coming next!)

San Jose and the Bay Area at large have plenty of great theatre, but sometimes it's the little gems that get lost in the shuffle. **The Pear**

prostitutes) and hide his true self. One night in a drunken stupor he makes a call and hires Alex, a good looking “straight” boy who hustles for money. Alex lives with his best friend and sometimes girlfriend Ellen, who runs her own money-making schemes with older rich men. Soon it appears that Mitchell and Alex have fallen in love, but that poses problems for everyone involved.

Although the show is a comedy, it also raises many serious questions about living as a gay person in a straight world. Mitchell laments at one point that we all learn about the American Dream, that anyone can have it all. But he knew that really only middle class, straight white protestant men have easy access to the American Dream, and if he acted on his feelings towards other men, he could have that option taken away from him.

Dragon Productions plays in a tiny theatre, with a shoe-string budget for set design, yet still managed to find four incredible actors to play these intriguing characters. **William Giammona** as Mitchell was both hilarious and heartbreaking as he showed us what a gay actor may have to give up in his personal life to be a success in his professional life. **Jennifer Lucas** as Diane played Hollywood to perfection as the fast-talking agent who just wanted her friend (along with herself) to succeed. **Maria Giere Marquis** held my attention in every scene with her character’s quirky clothes and quirkiest personality, but even as a hustler herself Ellen had our sympathy when she got herself into trouble. And **Henry Robert Nolin** as young Alex is an incredible actor who you should look out for in the future.

*The Little Dog Laughed* is an adult show, but probably fit for older teens as well. There are adult and sexual themes, but nothing too worrisome for anyone who knows the plot to begin with. Tickets range from \$16 (student) to \$25 (adult), so it is a fantastic deal for an amazing theater production, and opening night was sold out.

Thanks also to **Oren’s Hummus** who provided an amazing Opening Night Celebration spread!

*The Little Dog Laughed*

September 14 – October 7

**Dragon Productions Theatre**

535 Alma Street, Palo Alto

(parking can be troublesome, so arrive in plenty of time to find a spot)

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