

AISLE SAY San Francisco

THE OTHER PLACE

by **Sharr White**

Directed by Kimberly Mohne Hill

Presented by Dragon Productions

Dragon Productions Theatre

2120 Broadway St., Redwood City, CA / (650) 493-2006

Reviewed by [Judy Richter](#)

Dementia takes a terrible toll not only on the victim and family but also on society in general. **Sharr White's "The Other Place"** shows how dementia affects one woman and her family.

In the **Dragon Theatre** production directed by **Kimberly Mohne Hill**, **Judith Ann Miller** plays Juliana Smithton. She's a 52-year-old neurologist who has developed what appears to be a breakthrough product to treat dementia and, presumably, Alzheimer's disease, although that term is never used.

Pitching it to a group of doctors at a seminar in the Virgin Islands, she becomes distracted by what she says is a young woman wearing a yellow bikini and sitting in the back. She becomes so distracted that she can't continue.

Shortly thereafter, her husband, Ian (**Mark Drumm**), an oncologist, refers her to a colleague, Dr. Cindy Teller (**Maureen O'Neill**, called The Woman in the program), for an evaluation.

Juliana is hostile, accusing Cindy and Ian of having an affair and saying that he wants to divorce her. Ian denies her accusations.

Juliana also insists that she has been in touch with their daughter, Laurel (O'Neill), who disappeared 10 years ago at the age of 15. The Smithtons never knew what happened to her. She might have run off with Juliana's research assistant, Richard Sillner (**Paul Stout**, called The Man in the program), or she might have been abducted after running away.

The play's title refers to the family's former weekend cottage in Cape Cod. In her delusional state, Juliana goes there. Instead she encounters the owner, a woman (O'Neill) who -- after first being angry -- kindly appeases her.

Despite the play's tragic topic, it has its humorous moments. It also has moments of hope.

Miller skillfully navigates Juliana's emotional journey through personality changes and intellectual decline. Because so much of what she says may or may not be true, the audience must depend on Drumm's Ian for the truth. O'Neill does well in the other female roles, especially the woman in the cottage. Stout does well in his limited role as The Man.

Brian Corral's set, lit by **Jeff Swan**, is relatively bare bones but allows for shifting scenes. Costumes by **Heidi Kobara** are appropriate for the characters, but the sound by **Rory Strahan-Mauk** can become too loud between scenes.

Running 80 minutes without intermission, "The Other Place" is an absorbing look at the effects of dementia. Since it's so prevalent throughout society, many in the audience will no doubt recall their own experience with an afflicted family member or friend.

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