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East Side Players' Speaking in Tongues a thought-provoking production

By MARIA TZAVARAS

East Side Players latest show, *Speaking in Tongues* by Andrew Bovell, is a unique look at how life's problems and struggles — while different for everyone — are also eerily similar.

The show opens with two couples, Jane and Leon (Kizzy Kaye, Steve Switzman), and Sonya and Pete (Lydia Kiselyk, Ted Powers) arriving from the same bar to the same hotel room with plans to commit adultery.

The set is open concept, with no walls, and after couples dance together, they begin to tell their stories together, in synchronized and overlapping dialogue. It may seem a bit confusing at first, but it could be taken to show that those who are unhappy, missing something and want to cheat, may have different reasons that stem from the same place.

We are then privy to both of the couples explaining their evenings to their spouses, unknowingly, and shockingly, these two couples swapped spouses. And in the same style as the first scene, we hear Sonya and Leon, Jane and Pete, talk about their fragmented marriages and unhappiness, synchronized and in overlapping dialogue.

Throughout the remainder of this act we see the couples navigating the murky waters of betrayal and infidelity, two chance encounters between the wives and the husbands, and some honest dialogue that is moving, sometimes funny, but always thought-provoking.

There are also some other stories that we are privy to and they are explored in the second act.

Here, the same actors play different roles: another two couples, a woman disappears and more betrayal. There is also a long-lost love affair that is put into an interesting, two-sided spotlight, with two shocking perspectives.

Neil (Switzman) has always wondered why Sarah (Kiselyk) never married him 25 years earlier, Valerie (Kaye) is stuck on a back road and repeated calls to husband, John (Powers) go unanswered, until she meets Nick (also played by Powers), who offers to drive her home and returns home covered in blood.

This play is possible real-life circumstances portrayed on stage. It is sad, realistic, unnerving at times, and shows how disconnected we can become with ourselves, our partners and our own happiness.

All the characters portrayed by these actors — nine in total — showcases the casts' talent as they speak dialogue together, embody the different roles and learn the sheer volume of dialogue they have to remember.

Powers' portrayal of his three characters is believable and impressive, as is Kiselyk, who plays two totally different characters - the wife who is cheated on and the one who left without a care - with diversity and believability.

Switzman, who is a great comedic actor, is also impressive in his two roles in this more serious and dramatic show, and manages to bring levity throughout. Kaye also impresses playing two completely different characters showing her talent and range as an actor.

This show is heavy in dialogue and different in the usual play structure. It is not light and funny, but more a thought-provoking slice-of-life production that reminds us that we are all more similar than we are different.

Speaking in Tongues runs Feb. 26 to 28 and March 1; March 4 to 7, 8 p.m., at the Papermill Theatre, Todmorden Mills, 67 Pottery Rd. Tickets are \$22. To purchase tickets, call the box office at 416-425-0917 or visit www.eastsideplayers.ca



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