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audience reviews

Neat, Celebration Arts

Review: I wish I had seen this play sooner. As it is there is only one weekend left for you to see it and you should. Neat is the name of the author's aunt who as an infant suffered brain damage as her mother struggled to get her to the "colored" hospital after being turned away from the white hospital. You would expect a play that starts on such a downbeat note to be a study in misery but in fact it's a study in life with all the joy, anger frustration and assorted other emotions that life has to offer. Six women play all the parts, an amazing feat considering there must be at least 30 characters in the cast. Some of the funniest moments occur when the women portray male characters, Charlayne's dad, the teen-aged boys at the rally and the boy who walks Charlayne home from the dance. The swimming pool scene is hilarious and also a little heartbreaking to anyone who can remember the tragedy of a junior high school bad hair day. There are also painfully sad moments and moments of frustration and anger over being misrepresented and misunderstood. The recurring theme of the play is how the author was affected and inspired by her Aunt Neat. Neat never became the older, wiser relative that so many young people are blessed to have as role models. Instead she was an eternal child who never lost her sense of wonder and whose naive questions caused Charlayne to embark on a life-changing quest for answers. This is a wonderful play. Even though it is time-and-place specific it touches universal chords. It could leave anyone with a fuller sense of what it means to be human.

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