

reviews

MISS JULIA ****

By: David Gruber

***Miss Julia*, by August Strindberg premieres at La Mama**

Miss Julia toured Columbia, Spain and Italy for 3 successful seasons before finally making a long-anticipated premiere in New York City. Adapted by Ed Araiza from the classic and probably most best-known play by August Strindberg, it stars an international cast: the indomitable, very talented and always compelling Australian actress Tina Mitchell (*Miss Julia*) the well-known Columbian TV and film actor Jhon Alex Toro, (Juan) and the Columbian actress Gina Jaimes (Cristina) and directed by Italian Lorenzo Montanini.

The one act play written in 1888 resonates with issues that we are still facing today.

The story set in 19thc Colombia is about Juan a seemingly reluctant servant who is basically seduced by a very upper-class debutant-like young women. She is searching for some meaning to her trapped albeit gilded existence (embodied in the caged canary that is her most prized possession). Juan sees on his side a way to finally break out of his extreme poverty that binds him like generations before to a life of servitude and desperation.

The play, a very physical movement piece, which sometimes skates the edges between dialogue and dance, builds slowly but steadily into a passionate love between Juan and Julia.

His peasant girl friend essentially sleeps on stage for much of the play showing us her helplessness and the impossibility to challenge any event that concerns the upper classes.

The romance quickly spins out of control and begins to break down along class divides and the unrealistic and practical roadblocks to survive in a 19th century culture, but alas it's too late to put the ink back into the bottle of social mores and acceptability. Julia is scarred and condemned for life and sees no exit except one as the play morphs into high energy chaos and eventual tragedy.

The play was written for the "naturalism" theater movement of the late 19th century espoused by Strindberg and his mentor Emile Zola among others. Naturalism wanted the acting to be a focus of theater not elaborate sets and distracting costumes (a great departure for the period), and very physical acting to portray and enhance emotions and dialogue. This is addition to playing to intimate audiences close to the actors with the music on the stage as

wellall this in Miss Julia which pulsates with the syncopated folk rhythms of the tammurriata throughout and a refreshing and unique entry into the New York theater landscape.

Miss Julia* ***

La Mama

June 8-25, First Floor Theatre, 74A East 4th St, New York NY 10003 Tickets on sale at www.lamama.org or on 646 430 5374

Thursday to Saturday at 7:30PM; Sunday at 2PM

\$25 Adult Tickets; \$20 Students/Seniors; Limited \$10 Tickets