



THE ACTOR'S LIFE: (left to right) Patrick Stewart & T. R. Knight in *A Life in the Theatre*. Photo: Carol Rosegg

Theater Review

***A Life In The Theatre* chronicles eternal strife of an actor's life**

A Life In The Theatre

Written by David Mamet

Directed by Neil Pepe

Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre

236 West 45th Street

(212-239-6200), www.BroadwaysBestShows.com

By David NouNou

In *A Life in the Theatre*, playwright David Mamet hasn't so much as written a play but a chronicle of the atmosphere of any seedy backstage theater. Done as short scenes and vignettes, he has evoked the life, temperament, egos, and all the emotions that an actor endures on a daily basis. This isn't the glitz and the glamour of a Broadway musical, but the career entrapment and the devotion to the stage of any venue that is called a theater.

Originally opened on October 20, 1977, at the then Theatre De Lys (now the Lucille Lortel), it conjured up the mood, life, and shabbiness of such venues, all of which added to the show's authenticity. Due to the nature of this show, it is meant for an Off-Broadway house, which would only enhance the delicate balance of the show. Doing it in a big Broadway theater loses the intimacy and thus defeats the purpose of the show. Staged at the Schoenfeld Theatre, the play is no longer *being* in the moment but *acting* the moment.

A Life in the Theatre is about any two actors living their lives at and for the theater. In this instance—Robert, (Patrick Stewart), the aging actor on the wane, and John (T.R. Knight), the young actor on the rise—are the two thespians. Watching Mr. Stewart strut his stuff, it is hard to fathom that this actor could ever be on the wane. Mr. Stewart's artistry and command of the stage is impeccable. He *is* the stage, which only makes it that much harder for Mr. Knight. Although Mr. Knight is a good actor in his own right, and does his valiant best, he is no match for Mr. Stewart, thus making the premise of the show that much more lopsided. Had it been on a smaller stage, maybe this dichotomy may not have been as noticeable.

Regardless of its shortcomings, *A Life in the Theatre* is to be seen not only for Mr. Stewart's radiant performance but also for Mr. Mamet's view of the unglamorous side of what is known as the theater.

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