



**'A NIGHT IN VEGAS': (left to right) Jason Romas & Drew Stark in the play's best scene.**

**Photo: Crispin Quitarano**

## *Theater Review*

# Solid scenes & great punch lines are the highlight of *A Night in Vegas*

### *A Night in Vegas*

Written & directed by Joe Marshall

Thursday through Saturday at 10:30pm (beginning June 10, 2010)

The Bleecker Street Theatre

45 Bleecker Street, (212-352-3101)

[www.anightinvegasoffbroadway.com](http://www.anightinvegasoffbroadway.com)

**By Scott Harrah**

It is difficult to write a gay play and have it sustain itself for a whole evening before things run out of steam. However, playwright Joe Marshall has taken a different route and written five different vignettes that are fun, funny, entertaining, and touching. He's used a lot of Neil Simon sensibilities (when Simon was actually funny in such plays as *Plaza Suite* or *California Suite*). To Mr. Marshall's credit, 95 percent of it works. The other five percent is more directorial misjudgment and has nothing to do with Marshall's mostly solid writing.

Scenes One and Two, "A Dream Vacation," lean toward farce. All the scenes in these vignettes are set in the same hotel room. Ted (Nicholas Pierro) and Steven (Kelly Riley) have come to Las Vegas for an ideal weekend getaway. The room is tacky and they have to sleep in separate beds. Thus begins part one. Bedlam ensues when a dyslexic hustler comes into their room. It would be unfair to Mr. Marshall and his play to divulge too much information or mention his punch lines, because some of them are genuinely hilarious and have to be seen to be appreciated

Scene Three, "Rick and Andrew," is one of the most beautiful and touching gay scenes ever written. Andrew (Jason Romas) has lost his ride home and comes back to Rick's hotel room. Mr. Marshall has imbued this scene with genuine soul and not one false note. With touching performances by Drew Stark as Rick and Mr. Romas as Andrew, they infuse emotional reality into the scene.

Scene Four, aptly titled "Did You Hear That?" falls into the absurd category. Two couples come for a weekend to Vegas. One couple consists of a partner being deaf, and the other of a partner being blind. As the seeing and hearing partners go to get the luggage, the deaf and the blind duo (who do not get along) are left alone together in the room with a pack of cigarettes. Far-reaching absurdity, but it's hilarious and inoffensive nonetheless.

Scene Five, "Helen and Jack," is about a set of parents coming to Vegas to give their son away in marriage. Helen (Ali Grieb) is not comfortable with this situation but Jack (Bill Purdy) is proud of his son and has no reservations. This vignette falls under an everyday situation that parents face with the discomfort of their children's choices. Mr. Marshall has written an almost perfect scene to which many can relate. Mr. Purdy is very good indeed as the father; however, Miss Grieb is miscast. She is too young to play the mother, and her delivery is more whiny than genuinely disheartened. Otherwise, with a more mature actress in the part, this could have been a perfect scene.

Scene Six, "Twenty Something." touches on everything an older man from Colorado (Bill Purdy again, who's still quite good) who brings 20-year-old Josh (Scott Lilly) on his first trip to Vegas. Josh has had a full debauched weekend of sex, booze, cigarettes; you name it, and he can't remember a thing when he finally comes to. A lot goes on in this scene, and it's best to leave it to the audience to witness it firsthand. One just wishes it had a better ending instead of a contrived one. Note to Mr. Marshall: Let the show end 10 seconds earlier and leave the two alone.

To fully enjoy this show, one has to go with an open mind and the ability to laugh. Mr. Marshall has delivered an enjoyable evening for the audience to appreciate because *A Night in Vegas* has far superior writing than most gay plays. It is funny, touching, irreverent, with guaranteed laugh-out-loud punch lines.

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