



FIRST-RATE MISS DAISY: (left to right) Vanessa Redgrave & James Earl Jones in reverent revival of *Driving Miss Daisy*. Photo: Carol Rosegg

Theater Review

Vanessa Redgrave & James Earl Jones brilliant in *Driving Miss Daisy*

Driving Miss Daisy

Written by Alfred Uhry

Directed by David Esbjornson

John Golden Theatre

252 West 45th Street

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

By David NouNou

A unique and tender play that one savors like rare cognac. You do not gulp it down; you savor each sip (scene, in this case) and enjoy the bouquet of it. Yes, most of us know this play from the brilliant 1989 Oscar-winning movie that had unforgettable performances from Jessica Tandy and Morgan Freeman. Also, the movie was opened up to include characters that are only mentioned in the play. However, when you see this as a stage play, with two legendary performers like James Earl Jones and Vanessa Redgrave, you do not compare it to anything but have to let it stand on its own merits.

Starting in 1948 and going up to the early 1970s, *Driving Miss Daisy* recalls a strong-willed Southern Jewish woman, Daisy Werthan (Vanessa Redgrave), and her resistance to having an African-American chauffeur, Hoke Coleburn (James Earl Jones), because people would think she was "putting on airs" and flaunting being "rich" if she had a driver. However, upon the insistence of her son, Boolie (Boyd Gaines), and the insurance company, she ultimately relents, and a flinty friendship begins.

The premise of the play is simple enough: watching the developing friendship as each scene unfurls is a joy to behold. This could have been an overly sentimental play, but these two artists turn it into a memorable theatrical experience. Nothing is more thrilling for a theatergoer than to see actors at the top of their game. Mr. Jones and Ms. Redgrave prove this axiom to be true. Watching the two of them volley off each other is a theatrical moment that should not be missed.

However, it would be most unfair not to mention Boyd Gaines as Boolie. He is an integral part of this triangle, and he certainly holds his own with these two giants. Over the years, Mr. Gaines has been carving his own niche in the theater and certainly has his command of the stage. There is no point in nitpicking on some of the flaws in the play: The fact that it was originally an intimate Off-Broadway play and now seems a little lost in a Broadway house, or the fact that it was made into an unforgettable movie. One sees this production simply for the joy of watching Jones, Redgrave, and Gaines giving

powerhouse performances.

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Broadway Listings

DRAMA REVIVALS



SUPERB 'MISS DAISY': Vanessa Redgrave & James Earl Jones in revival of the classic.

Photo: Carol Rosegg



DRIVING MISS DAISY

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