



**FAMILY BUSINESS:** (left to right) Cherry Jones & Sally Hawkins in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Photo: Joan Marcus

### *Theater Review*

**Superb Cherry Jones is highlight of dated *Mrs. Warren's Profession***

***Mrs. Warren's Profession***  
**Written by George Bernard Shaw**  
**Directed by Doug Hughes**  
**American Airlines Theatre**  
**227 West 42nd Street**  
**(212-719-1300), [www.RoundaboutTheatre.org](http://www.RoundaboutTheatre.org)**

**By David NouNou**

Written in 1902, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was controversial material in its day, but today it somehow seems just a verbal volley of outdated material that is out of sync with modern values. The conflict here is between mother and daughter—and how the mother made her fortune while daughter was sent to school, getting the best education money could buy.

Vivie Warren (Sally Hawkins) has finished college and is visiting the family home in Surrey, England, awaiting her mother's return from one of many travels abroad. Vivie has only seen her mother a few times in her life and knows nothing about her. For Vivie has been to all the finest schools in England and graduated in mathematics. What she really graduated with is independence and being headstrong.

Kitty Warren (Cherry Jones) is an independent woman. She is a single mom and has never divulged to Vivie her father's identity—or the source of the family money. Vivie, in due time, finds all this out, and she is not necessarily the better for it. Kitty Warren did not have a privileged life. She toiled in her youth with no success, until her sister Liz walked into her life and took her away from drudgery to become a madam. Houses were opened across Europe, in Brussels, Italy, Austria, and Kitty is the manager in charge of them all, thus forcing her to travel constantly.

Kitty has now come home and wants to start over with Vivie, but, alas, it's not meant to be. For Vivie has morals and scruples. Although she has benefited from her mother's work, she cannot accept the fact that her mother is still in the "business." Vivie wants a clean break from Kitty, but Mrs. Warren will not give up her daughter without a fight. She has sacrificed everything so that one day mother and daughter will reunite. These are titan women and both are accustomed to getting what they want, but someone has to ultimately lose. Vivie may have been admired for her standards and ideals in 1902, but by today's standards, she seems rather foolish. In a time when young women do anything from being Playboy Bunnies to pole dancers to further their education, Vivie seems ungrateful for turning away from her mother's fortune. Granted, she may have noble aspirations, but in today's hard times, no one would walk away from all that money for the sake of principle.

What is still valid in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is the relationship between Kitty and Vivie; the rest of the material could be deleted, but one simply cannot alter a Shaw classic. Doug Hughes has done well with Cherry Jones in the past and again here. He has given her shading, and Ms. Jones is consistently superb and delivers, despite an

odd cockney accent. Sally Hawkins as Vivie, on the other hand, is left to her own devices. Mr. Hughes should have reigned in her shrillness and her never-ending hand gesticulations. Edward Hibbert, as Kitty's long-trusted friend, Mr. Praed, is one of the few delightful presences from start to finish. Period pieces can make good revivals. However, in order for a revival to be effective, its premise has to resonate with today's audiences. It is possible for a daughter to distance herself from her mother, but in these hard times, who would walk away from a family fortune?

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