



DOCTOR'S ORDERS: Zoe Perry & Laurie Metcalf in *The Other Place*. Photo: Joan Marcus



Theater Review

Ms. Metcalf makes *The Other Place* 'Roseanne' star outstanding in otherwise flawed show

THE OTHER PLACE

Written by Sharr White

Directed by Joe Mantello

Samuel J. Friedman Theatre

261 West 47th Street

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

By Scott Harrah

It is rare indeed when an actor's performance is so incandescent, intense and dynamic that it actually transcends otherwise run-of-the-mill material and leaves the audience feeling both exhilarated and drained. Laurie Metcalf, star of countless movies and plays and best known for playing Jackie on TV's long-running hit sitcom "Roseanne," is one of the few actors who can actually take a flawed stage play such as this and turn it into an extraordinary theatrical event.

In *The Other Place*, now playing on Broadway after an acclaimed run Off-Broadway run at MCC in 2011, Ms. Metcalf portrays Dr. Juliana Smithton, a successful neurologist in her 50s who is suffering from an undiagnosed illness. While giving a lecture to a convention of doctors in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, about a new medication she is representing for a pharmaceutical company, Juliana experiences what she calls an "episode," and the rest of the 80-minute one act explores a rather harrowing ordeal involving flashbacks that blend both fact and fiction.

Audiences do not always know whether what we are seeing is real or imagined by Juliana in her deteriorating condition, but the narrative is not difficult to follow, and Ms. Metcalf's performance is so completely engrossing that it is easy to overlook the narrative glitches in playwright Sharr White's rather convoluted script.

Tony-winning director Joe Mantello gets outstanding performances from the supporting cast members, most notably Daniel Stern as Ian, Juliana's sympathetic husband; and Zoe Perry (Ms. Metcalf's real-life daughter) in three roles as Dr. Teller, a physician; Laurel, Juliana's daughter; and The Woman, a Massachusetts resident, making each role a distinct character. John Schiappa is also quite effective as

Richard, Juliana's son-in-law.

Scenic designers Eugene Lee and Edward Lee create a utilitarian set made up of nothing but glassless steel window frames, beautifully anchoring a story that moves, in just a little over one hour, from St. Thomas to Boston to a summer home in Cape Cod.

With a less gifted actor, *The Other Place*, with its scattershot storyline, may not have worked, but Ms. Metcalf squeezes every drop of emotion and pathos out of Sharr White's tale to paint a portrait of a woman trying desperately to overcome the physical and emotional challenges that have consumed her life.

The Other Place is not just a perfect vehicle for Ms. Metcalf's many talents; it also features one of the most richly textured and haunting performances we are likely to see on the New York stage this year.

Edited by Scott Harrah

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