



FIRST-RATE REVIVAL: 'The Winslow Boy': (left to right) Spencer Davis Milford, Zachary Booth, Alessandro Nivola, Roger Rees, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Charlotte Parry. Photo: Joan Marcus.



Theater Review

The Winslow Boy revival is a winner

THE WINSLOW BOY

Written by Terence Rattigan

Directed by Lindsay Posner

American Airlines Theatre

227 West 42nd Street

(212-719-1300), www.RoundaboutTheatre.org

By David NouNou

Unique, interesting and intelligent are three words that instantly pop up to mind upon viewing Terrance Rattigan's 1946 play *The Winslow Boy*. Unique in writing style because it takes the time to introduce its characters and set the narrative and tone of the show; interesting in content; and never lags in exposition; intelligently scripted, acted and directed.

Rattigan wrote in a stylized manner and for contemporary audiences might seem dated. However, the subject matter is timeless. We are talking about honor and the lengths a father goes through to protect his son's innocence. Based on an actual incident in Edwardian-era England; the plot centers on 13-year-old Ronnie Winslow, a cadet (Spencer Davis Milford) being expelled from the Royal Naval Academy for stealing and forging the signature of a fellow cadet of a postal order (money order) of five shillings. Not a huge sum today, but in 1912 it must have been a handsome amount for a child.

Ronnie comes home in terror and must face his father, Arthur Winslow (Roger Rees), a retired, ailing and honored banker. Upon questioning, Ronnie claims his innocence and his father believes him. Thus sets in motion an ordeal that takes two years to resolve. What is at stake is not the stolen money, guilt or innocence but the boy's future honor and the family's standing in society. The ordeal takes its toll on the entire family, both emotionally and financially

There are three outstanding performances; Roger Rees as the father risking everything he owns, including his health, to defend the family name is absolutely superb. Watching him crumble as the years take their toll on him is heartbreaking. As the barrister, Sir Robert Morton, hired to defend Ronnie, Alessandro Nivola is excellent. His steely cold and emotionless mannerisms are perfection. As Ronnie's older sister Catherine, a suffragette with a mind of her own, Charlotte Parry is wonderful; simultaneously hard and soft and has a lot to lose from this ordeal, gives a balanced, nuanced performance.

Kudos must be given to Lindsay Posner, for his outstanding direction, for in the wrong hands, *The Winslow Boy* could have come off as a very dated, talky British upper -crust snoozefest. Mr. Posner paces the play brilliantly, injecting humor where needed and extracts wonderful

performances from the supporting cast, which include Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio as Grace Winslow, the mother; the ever affable Michael Cumsty as the solicitor, Desmond Curry; Chandler Williams as John Watherstone, Catherine's fiancé; and Zachary Booth as the doltish older brother, Dickie Winslow.

The Winslow Boy is to be savored as one would a fine glass of sherry. The combination of wonderful writing, fine-tuned direction and memorable performances gives the show the rich bouquet that lingers on the palate deliciously.

Edited by Scott Harrah

Published October 20, 2013

Reviewed at press performance on October 19, 2013

Copyright © October 20, 2013, StageZine.com