



Two Superb Productions, one in Walnut Creek, the other in Berkeley!

The Window Age"

Years ago, Karen and I used to attend the Aurora Theatre when they utilized the Julia Morgan designed Berkeley City Club at 2315 Durant, prior to their opening their own theatre on Addison Street, next to the Berkeley Repertory Theatre complex. One of my fellow theatre critics, Ken Bullock, with our San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle has been after me to go and see a new play, "**The Window Age**", written by Christopher Chen, in the Berkeley City Club, produced by the Central Works theater company. Finally, I was able to work it in this past week and I am in full agreement with Ken, this a truly a remarkable - - yes, in fact, a brilliant piece of theatre!

"**The Window Age**" is a psychological thriller, a suspenseful, intriguing, multi-level thought-evoking work that will leave you spellbound! Set in England in the early 1920's following the "Great War", the story evolves intertwining three people with longstanding personal relationships, post-war "Shell shock syndrome", and the emerging medical discipline of psychiatry. The artful direction by Gary Graves pulls us deeply into the vortex of these interwoven lives!

Valerie Fox (played by Jan Zvaifler) is a modernist writer. Her husband, Jeremy Fox (Joel Mullennix), is a recovering war veteran, and Simon Floyd (Richard Frederick) (in a character similar to Sigmund Freud) is a psychologist searching for validity and answers in his highly controversial field of medical psychopathology. What is unique about this play is the way it examines relationships from three different levels and like windows into the workings of the mind, our author allows us to examine what is going on - - within the mind consciously, by the open conversations we have with other people; by unspoken conversations we have with people in our minds; and by the subconscious thoughts or actions we have concerning other people.

To outward appearances, Simon Floyd is merely an old friend and or teaching mentor (a college professor), who has come to visit the Fox couple, without any known agenda. As superficial discussions go on between the three individuals, in which Floyd explains some of the more complex theories his field is exploring (including dream analysis and hypnosis), an underlying verbal interchange is going on in their minds at the same time, in which their true feelings and intentions towards each other are revealed. Portions of this play repeats itself, with the dynamics changing to another level, wherein the actors act out and verbalize the secret conversations they are having in their minds. At this level we discover that the two men have been and still are, rivals for the affections of Valerie, and that they intensely dislike each other. We also discover that the wife, who is now having great difficulties in her relationship with her husband, had previously admired Floyd as an emerging expert in his field, and now has thoughts about what might have been had she connected with the doctor, instead of her husband. Then the play repeats itself again on another level, in a fantasy interchange between the two rivals, now openly discussing their dislike for each other and why that animosity exists. Wow! Can you imagine what life would be like if one could hear others' private thoughts and they could hear ours?

I have never experienced a play quite like this and it left me spellbound! The acting is pluperfect! This is absolutely a brilliant piece of writing, a challenge and an epiphany for one who enjoys new revelations in play writing. By all means, this play is absolutely worth a trip to Berkeley and a definite reason for me to want to see more productions by this theatrical company.

The Central Works company has been production plays in the Berkeley City Club since 1996. The Berkeley City Club only seats a small number of patrons, in which the audience (less than 50 seats) is seated around the perimeter. This gives the audience the opportunity to hear and experience every nuance, every utterance of every word spoken. The parking is the only problem unless you don't mind paying \$10 for a parking space in a lot adjacent to the theater. We drove around the block and found parking on the street a block away from the theatre. Let me again repeat that the Berkeley City Club is located at 2315 Durant, between Shattuck and Telegraph.

"**The Window Age**" only continues through this weekend, with performances on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., and closes on Sunday, March 22nd with a 2 p.m., matinee. Call (510) 558-1381 for reservations or tickets or visit their website at <http://www.centralworks.org/> for additional information.

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

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by date

[April 02, 2006](#)

[April 23, 2006](#)

[April 30, 2006](#)

[May 07, 2006](#)

[May 14, 2006](#)

[June 18, 2006](#)

[June 25, 2006](#)

[July 09, 2006](#)

[July 16, 2006](#)

[July 23, 2006](#)

[August 20, 2006](#)

[August 27, 2006](#)

[September 03, 2006](#)

[September 10, 2006](#)

[October 08, 2006](#)

[October 15, 2006](#)

[October 29, 2006](#)

[December 03, 2006](#)

[December 10, 2006](#)

[December 17, 2006](#)

[January 28, 2007](#)

[February 04, 2007](#)