

Theatre Review: 'All My Sons' at the Keegan Theatre

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Bradley Smith and Kevin Adams. Photo by C. Stanley Photography.

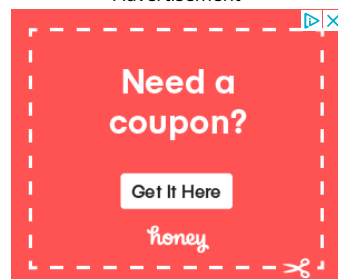
A family just isn't a family without chaos, some melodrama, and a few well-kept deep, dark secrets. And neither is a play a play when it is written by Arthur Miller. After a successful *Crucible* last season, DC's Keegan Theatre returns to the playwright's literary canon with their production of the American drama, *All My Sons*. Set in 1946, one year after World War I the lives of a suburban family struggling to survive a scandalous past and the unresolved disappearance of their son and brother. "Everything that happens seems to be coming back to Kate Keller (Sheri S. Herren) forebodes. And boy does it ever.

“...director Susan Marie Rhea breathes new life into a sixty-five year old work...”

Much like the character's in Miller's Pulitzer Prize winning drama, *Death of a Salesman*, each person in *All My Sons* is trapped at a spiritual crossroads. The Kellers, their neighbors, a long ago must all choose between extremes – staying vs. leaving, love vs. loyalty, denial vs. acceptance, and even life vs. death. However, making the “right” choice proves a mammoth the divide between right and wrong is often, at best, ambiguous. No decision is easy or without consequence. It is this complexity that drives the narrative and will keep you invested building drama about what happens when one's pursuit of the American Dream goes terribly awry.

Much of the strength of this nearly two and a half hour production is due largely to its strong ensemble cast. Kevin Adams, for example, is affable as family patriarch, Joe Keller. Often punctuating lines with a haughty laugh or good-natured pat on the back, Adams portrays a husband and father who just wants to keep the mood light and his family happy. When Joe Keller's sketchy past comes back to haunt him, it is Adams' winsome portrayal of this flawed character that elicits sympathy rather than disdain or indifference from the audience.

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Kevin Hasser and Brianna Letourneau. F
Photography.

Kevin Hasser is outstanding as Chris Keller, Joe and Kate's youngest adult son. Hasser's is a demanding role. The character is often forced to abruptly contend with conflicting emotive believably innocent, his interactions with Adams and Herren almost cherubic and his scenes with love interest Ann Deever (Brianna Letourneau) amusingly awkward. However, by the end of the play, Hasser is a man overwrought with confusion, despair, and rage. Fortunately, Hasser has the chops of a seasoned actor and manages this lamb to lion transformation with near perfect

Likewise Sheri S. Herren gives an appropriately self-possessed depiction of family matriarch, Kate Heller. At once congenial and startlingly forthright, Kate possesses the feminine po dutiful wife and mother, but she is by far the family's unabashed leader and arguably its heroine. Herren's nuanced performance – each deliberate gesture and every knowing glance protective albeit stoic character she portrays.

Sheri Herren and Kevin Hasser. Photo
by C. Stanley Photography.

Also memorable is Brianna Letourneau as Ann Deever. Letourneau's subtle and sincere portrayal of the Keller's childhood neighbor balar the play's mostly effusive characters. Bradley Foster Smith's portrayal of Ann's distraught brother, George Deever, is, however, anything b unrelentingly anxious and frenetic delivery is jarring and perhaps over the top.

Allison Corke (Lydia Lubey) and Michael Innocenti (Frank Lubey) offer refreshingly light-hearted performances as the Keller's helpful and v neighbors. Likewise Peter Finnegan (Dr. Jim Bayliss) and Cate Brewer (Sue Bayliss) who trade quips throughout are comical as a long marr by time and unrealized ambitions.

The Keegan Theatre's intimate space works well for a play with only one setting. There are no tedious or elaborate transitions. But despit collectively the crew pays impeccable attention to detail. The weathered white picket fence and slightly worn fixtures designed by Mark Jo Sound designer Tony Angelini's subtle effects (ie. chirping crickets) and Lighting designer Stephanie P. Freed's dramatic opening sequence Nugent's costume designs are also quite beautiful and of course era appropriate. Assembling an all-star, stellar team, director Susan Mar

new life into a sixty-five year old work; a timely and impactful show is reborn.

Running Time: 2 hours, 30 min with a 15 minute intermission.

All My *Sons* plays at Keegan Theatre, 1742 Church Street, NW, Washington, DC, through December 1. For more information and/or tickets [click here](#).
