**Private Pain in Public Pews Gospel Play
Review**

Rating: 🟊🟊🟊🟃(3 ½)

I wanted to reach out to you in this forum to give you my detailed thoughts on the play this weekend.

First, I must congratulate you on a great production, an eclectic and expertly scripted dialogue and using the devices of the theatrical trade such as mixing humour and tears, heightening the impact of serious issues - specifically during the opening sequence with what I'll call "The Three Stooges" comedy moment or Jenny's monologue which is serious, funny and thought-provoking or the moment where the action freezes on stage and the two children emerge to reveal what the audience always has known and that is that children see, perceive and understand a whole lot more than they're credited for. The play-ending cliff-hanger added that element of the unexpected and unpredictable.

My favourite scenes were 1) Jenny’s monologue, 2) The Fight scene (with Sister Terry and Jenny), 3) The children’s emergence on stage and 4) Samantha and The church mother (this scene I found to be the most touching and emotionally moving).

The play presents to the church the idea that the prophetic message that the church must ‘get the dung out of the dung gate’. When Nehemiah was repairing the wall in Jerusalem, there were many gates which had crumbled or were in need of repair. The dung gate is one of those gates. That gate was used as the only gate from which the filth of the city was removed and cast out of city walls. The Lord warns that if we continue to harbour these private pains, hurts, deceptions, disappointments, lies and the like, we as the Body of Christ will continue to be ill and ineffective as ministers of His grace, mercy and salvation. Only when we acknowledge our failures and inadequacies (releasing and removing the dung outside of the gate) will we be free and clear to live a transparently godly life – one that will bless, encourage, heal and uplift our world.

My friend who was visiting from New Jersey thought the play was great but had this to say: “I wish there had been more reflection on the part of Minister Terry and The Bishop characters. It seemed they only repented after they got caught”. Indeed it might have been ***more real*** to have provided for a time of reflection while they assessed the wrong they had committed before immediately repenting and having the angel hover over them.

Chris Lowe was wonderful and promising in his role as Minister Terry accompanied by momentary flashes of brilliance. It appears his time with Andrew Craig’s Christmas project may have prepped him somewhat for his role in this play. It seemed however, his acting & singing dramatically, were mutually exclusive somehow. A more substantive performance would have had his melodic and aesthetically pleasing voice connect deeper with character, script and lyrics. Such a performance from this principal character would elevate this production to a 4 star rating. Stellar performances from all principals and supporting cast would send this production into stratospheric proportions.

Finally Elaine, I truly do applaud you on your success with your book and the play. I’m sorry that more didn’t come out to support you here in your hometown. But it is what they say about a prophet not even being received or welcomed in his own country. Take heart and keep it moving. The same occurred with Jesus so you’re in good company. Congratulations on a job well done. It was structurally virtually seamless; humorous, entertaining, generated a lot of discussion, with much reflection and soul-searching amongst the church people. I absolutely loved it! By all accounts, the audience loved it as well!

Reviewed by: Kathy Grant

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