

Pas-sage

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reviewed by Debbie Hoodiman Beaudin · March 15, 2011



Pictured: Wesley Broulik and Mindi Logan in a scene from Pas-sage

The first thing I noticed about *Pas-sage*, a short play written by Wesley Broulik, is the set: a small, messy room with liquor bottles everywhere, a pizza box on the bedside table, a laptop, an ashtray. The room is clearly being occupied by someone in transit, not a domestic type. Hung throughout the room—on the walls, across the center, along the ceiling—are pages clipped to wires like socks on clotheslines. Some of these pages are small enough to have been torn out of a novel. Others are on 8½ by 11 paper, as if they come from printed manuscripts. During the play, the two characters—Howard (Wesley Broulik) and Miranda (Mindi L. Logan)—move among these pages.

It is appropriate that the written word takes up such a physical space in the set since it takes up so much psychological space in the characters' minds. Howard and Miranda are writers, though opposite types. Howard deeply loves writing—and he writes every day, but with very little success. He is not widely read, and he had to self-publish his latest novel on the internet. Miranda is the author of an Oprah-endorsed, best-selling, tell-all memoir. The problem is, that was 10 years ago, and she has never released a follow-up book. She makes her living drifting from university to university, working as a guest lecturer, milking her past success for everything she can.

Broulik, thankfully, places a plot on top of this subtext, and the action of the play takes place during a key night when Howard and Miranda come home to Miranda's messy room, drunk from a party, and they have a drunken fight that will determine the future of their relationship. (Yes, I thought of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* too, but there are important differences.) As the characters fight, they divulge their insecurities, what they want—or don't want—from one another, and the mistakes they've made in the past and are making in the present. The plot's structure comes from the ways they move closer to and farther from one another—literally, emotionally—and the ways they negotiate their relationship conflict and their identities as artists. It must be difficult to put together a plot where the action is so verbal, and I commend Broulik for keeping it interesting. I do think, however, that it could use some re-working. Broulik could tighten up what each section of the fight accomplishes. Also, there were a few places where I wondered why the characters didn't just leave the room.

One thing I liked—really liked—about the production was the directing. In a play with so much talking, Michelle Seaton manages to make the piece very physical. She creates interesting moments in how the actors move from place to place throughout the room, and their physical proximity often mirrors or parallels their emotional proximity. I also commend the actors. Several times, I found it interesting to watch the actors listening. Both parts are complex and the argument requires Logan and Broulik to jump from emotion to emotion, often rapidly. They both handle this well.

Overall, *Pas-sage* is a successful short play with a captivating (though not perfect) plot, an interesting subtext, and fine directing and acting.