



Steel Kiss



Playwright: Robin Fulford
Director: Sandhano Schultze

Director's Note:

Reading up on the subject I was shocked to realize how oppressive our society still is today towards homosexuality. I was surprised how deep the hatred was. There were friends who were indeed homophobic or felt that gays were victims of a troubled childhood. I want to dedicate this play to the people who are willing to come out and face a society, which would like to extinguish them, with their love and truth. In our society if they were anything but homosexuals showing their true colours would be historic.

Awards:

Jessie Richardson award nomination:
Outstanding Direction, Sandhano Schultze

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ACTING IS DEEP, BUT PLAY IS THIN

STEEL KISS

Vancouver Little Theatre/Pink Ink Productions
Vancouver Little Theatre, to May 26 at 8:30 p.m.
By LLOYD DYKK

"It was an accident, we were drinking, things got out of hand," are some of the things we hear from the four young men who, in Robin Fulford's play *Steel Kiss*, have just beaten a gay man to death. Fulford, who based his play on a similar 1985 event in Toronto's High Park, seeks to uncover the more deep-seated reasons that could explain such behavior.

Unfortunately, not much of what it finds is very original. The play is only an hour long, which might make you think this is concision itself, but it's a false concision, since it seems to have said pretty well every-thing it had to say in the first 15 minutes.

The four actors in the show play a considerable number of parts (and play them very well, under the direction of Sandhano Schultze), including: the toughs themselves, the school principal and the foot-ball coach, various parents, girls, cruising gay men, and many others.

But the action moves back and forth from scene to scene and time to time and character to character so much that the play's techniques soon begin to call more attention to themselves than to what they should be serving. In short, it starts to look like acting class.

It's certainly punchy. The play is highly explicit (a couple of people walked out on opening night) and Schultze's violent direction goes for the wall. He gets wonderful performances from Eric Armstrong, Michael Rogers, Mark Weatherley and Ted Cole, especially in the scenes where they're in the park, and we see their hellish friendship for what it is: not so much friendship as a common ground in hostility, fear and confusion.

Sexuality here, among those who have only the narrowest view of what is right or what is possible, is most likely to be affirmed by playing it off innocent others - others of obvious difference, which is the real perversion. The most frightening portrait is Cole's, whose face and, especially, eyes are a mask - rather, not a mask at all, because there's nothing in all that scary vacuity to hide.

Del Surjik's set (as well as his lighting) is very good. It consists only of four body outlines scrawled in white against the black, with parallel height-lines going through them, police lineup-style. With those lines slicing each figure into components, it reads something about the dissection of man's totality.

It's only the play itself that doesn't measure up. It's too fragmentary to accumulate much meaning.

Cast:

Billy: Eric Armstrong

Jack: Michael Rogers

Tony: Mark Weatherley

Neil: Ted Cole

Lighting and Set Designer: Del Surjik

Costumer Designer: Debbie Windholz

Sound Designer: Lowell Morris

Stage Manager: Beata van Berkom

Assistant Stage Manager: Donna Mailey

Photographer: Stephen Mtchell

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