

Ellie Goetz

The Drag Was Everything but a Drag

When *The Drag* opened almost one hundred years ago, it was considered vulgar and uncanny. The play was shut down, and Mae West, the mastermind behind the show, was criticized for her work. Now, *The Drag* has audience members giving standing ovations as the show's progressive ideas and concepts remain relevant to this day. Fordham Theatre: WE RISE is presenting *The Drag* November 10-12th and 18th-20th in the Pope Auditorium on 113 W 60th Street. This three-act performance runs around 90 minutes long, with a 10-minute intermission between the 2nd and 3rd act. *The Drag* conveys the story of a secret drag queen by the name of Rolly who struggles with self-identification and gender. Rolly battles with living the life he is meant to live versus the life forced onto him by others. An array of problems emerges from both worlds as he hides behind a romanceless marriage, where Rolly and his wife Clair both have feelings for the same man. Although we are not fully introduced to the character of Rolly until almost 30 minutes into the show, Rolly's impact is remarkable. Subtle details such as his gold and black robe add touches of wealth and pristine, hinting he has a knack for fashion.

The costumes are elaborate and yet stay true to the times. Hairstyles, props, and other small nick-nacks, such as an old-fashioned telephone, help to remind audience members that the play takes place in the 1920s. With a small cast of less than twenty, members of the team who aren't written into the bulk of the 3rd act play ensemble drag queens during Rolly's elaborate party. Considering the remarkable makeup work at hand, plain characters who we see earlier on in the show are transformed into marvelous, almost unrecognizable drag queens.

Although the script is rather vague, the director, Rebecca Miller Kratzer, makes immense character and production choices that help to elevate the show and bring the story to life. For

example, when Rolly gets shot at the end of the 3rd act, a ringing sound is sent off throughout the theatre. This sound remains as Parsons, Rollys home assistant, initially reacts to the shooting. The sound finally dies out as the investigation begins and other characters appear on stage. The fading of the ringing helps to represent the passing of time. Simultaneously as the ringing starts, blood begins to drip down the set walls, making audience members feel as though they are right there in the Kingbury's 1920's parlor with them.

The stage presence and clear connection of the actors in *The Drag* is phenomenal. The dynamic between the Doctor and the Judge is spot on. It is clear that the two characters are supposed to be lifelong friends, and the actors perfectly embody that aspect while also respectfully disagreeing with one another on numerous occasions throughout the play. Furthermore, Aunt Barbra and Clair's relationship is just as fantastic. The two women possess a close-knit mother-daughter relationship, making it apparent that Aunt Barbra is the closest thing Clair has to a mom, as she helps her through her marriage troubles. The intensity of Clair's distress is balanced out by the comedic relief of Rollys drag friends such as Clem and The Dutchess. Rollys friends are quick-witted and bold. These actors play their parts, giving 110%, making every action noteworthy and over the top.

The play *The Drag* is anything but a drag. This show helps the audience immerse themselves into a world that most people may be unfamiliar with. The eye-catching costumes, power posing, set design, and character dynamic make *The Drag* unforgettable in every way. If one production deserves a standing ovation, it would be this one.