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Main Street Theatre presents 'The Book of Magdalene'

ENTERTAINMENT / February 22, 2021 / By Jess Swenson

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Main Street Theatre treated their audience by streaming their new show, “The Book of Magdalene” by Caridad Svich. Directed by Amelia Rico, the play is a fully staged production that streamed February 11-21 on the Main Street Theatre website.

A Search for Grace in a Faithless Place

Taking place in the edge-lands after a catastrophic event, “The Book of Magdalene” is a fascinating contemporary piece that puts a modern Mary Magdalene in a dystopian world not too different from our own. The story explores the concept of grace in a deindustrialized city that’s become stagnant, with Magdalene searching for faith in a place where everyone is hanging on by a thread.

“The Book of Magdalene” asks audiences what it means to find the courage to move forward in a world that seems stuck, even when it seems impossible. It’s a struggle that I think everyone can relate to, especially nowadays.

A New Magdalene

Magdalen is a character struggling to be more than a bystander in her own life, working as a call-lines operator for the lonely while battling loneliness herself. Working as the sole-provider for herself and her Elder, Len struggles to find faith in a world that seems to be more lie than truth. Len is a new kind of Magdalene, one built away from the scriptures.

Svich said she wanted to create a Magdalene that wasn’t based on the historical, but still struggled with faith while dealing with the unknown. Svich didn’t want to erase the original Magdalene completely, but she did make sure that she was almost entirely reinvented.

“What should be clear is that this is not a historical or even an alternative history play,” said Svich. “This follows a young woman, in her day-to-day life, in a place where she feels devalued by society. Magdalene prays in her own way for the everyday sinners and saints in our midst as she tries to make sense of what feels like the mess of her life...but it’s a new story of its own, riffing on elements of the remnants of the literary figures of Magdalene as a character.”

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Lights, Camera, a New Kind of Set

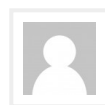
Like most theatres in the midst of the pandemic, Main Street has adapted their sets to be more screen-friendly, and it's paid off. With close shots that show the actor's every expression paired with the viewer's ability to adjust their own volume, every viewer is automatically given the best seat in the house.

It's a novel experience to be able to hear every word the actors say, and it's one I definitely can't complain about.

We all miss live theatre, but Main Street has managed to create a blend of theatre that has both the benefits of screen performance and the magic of the stage.

Photo is of Jennifer Wang as Len & Mariam Albishah as Ru by RicOrnelProductions

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