

TASTE of Greenwich House

After-Party Cocktail Competition

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Tuesday, March 13, 2018

9:00 - 11:00 p.m.
125 West 18th Street

Join us for the first ever Taste After-Party Cocktail Competition, featuring Tito's Handmade Vodka. Enjoy specially purveyed after-dinner bites while mixologists craft custom creations to win your vote for the best cocktail.

**Tickets and more information at
greenwichhouse.org/taste**



Hindle Wakes at The Mint Theater Company

By Eric Uhlfelder

It's hard to understand the puritanical mindset prevalent only a century ago. But one can imagine its appeal: a simple way of bringing order to a chaotic world by making clear distinctions between right and wrong.

Of course, things are rarely black and white, and trying to treat all problems that way can often make things worse. This is the matter with which three families wrestle in the Mint Theater Company's latest production: *Hindle Wakes*. In its continuous search for forgotten plays, the Mint again takes its cue from England. (The obscure title references holiday revelations that come to families of a fictional mill town in Lancashire.)

During the playwright's too brief life of 32 years, Stanley Houghton penned more than a dozen plays that theatre historian Maya Cantu of Bennington College describes as, "a blending of observed realism with shrewd comic grit."

Premiered at London's Gaiety Theatre in 1912, just a year before Houghton contracted meningitis, *Hindle Wakes* was an early example of modern, progressive plays of the 20th century. It no doubt shocked audiences with its brazen honesty about sex and marriage, guilefully approached through a seemingly innocent and traditional storyline.

Arched Victorian iron trusses canopy over the stage to suggest a religious steeple and the affluence under which most of the action takes place. Keeping with its signature mark, the Mint rewards the patient theatregoer. The three short acts before intermission plod along, giving us the basics about a love triangle and what needs to be done about it, according to the mores of the day.

What keeps the initial pace of the play in first gear is that we learn about the mess largely through the uninformed eyes of the parents. Their morality trumps reality, as we hear virtually nothing from the two young women and young man on which the plot is centered. This seems odd, until we realize the author is setting up the action that follows intermission.

The play's unique pulse, deftly calibrated under Gus Kaikkonen's direction, is driven by how it unexpectedly turns as the lovers reveal themselves. We first think the two generations occupy opposite sides of a moral compass only to find their beliefs are far more aligned than even they could imagine.

The only pragmatic, progressive voice to be heard is the last to speak, revealing that women and men are also more alike than either would ever admit.

The cast is first-rate, anchored by Nathaniel Jeffcote (played splendidly by Jonathan Hogan), the father of the young man. Alan Jeffcote (Jeremy Beck), the son, is the lad who cocks things up. He strides from one lass to the other, naively thinking he knows what is happening. His fiancée, Beatrice Farrar (Emma Geer), takes unexpected news about Alan's dalliance with the poise of a priest hearing about a death. And Fanny Hawthorn (Rebecca Noelle Brinkley) shines as the light-hearted other girl who knows what she wants and doesn't want better than anyone else on stage.

Another layer of conflict lies in the values and ambitions of Alan's and Fanny's mothers. Mrs. Jeffcote (Alan's patrician mom, played by Jill Tanner) seeks a marriage of comparable status. The working class Mrs. Hawthorn (Sandra Shipley), Fanny's mom, wants to see her daughter avoid scandal while getting ahead. Both seem to agree their children's own desires are of no consequence.

Splashes of humor and wit help pace the play. The father of the engaged daughter, Sir Timothy Ferrar (Brian Reddy) quips, "She hasn't seen him [Alan] for 10 days, thou knows, and that seems a long time when it's before the wedding. It doesn't seem so long afterwards."

When she learns of her fiancé's betrayal, Beatrice ponders, in Alan's presence, whether she would prefer being lusted after (rather than honored and respected): "I wonder which feeling a woman would rather arouse...which is most like love?" And "You see," she adds, "men have never had to exercise self-control like women have."

Alan is then turned on his head when he's rejected (by whom I will not say): "It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling your life that I'm refusing you, but because I'm afraid of spoiling mine. That didn't occur to you?"

I shan't risk spoiling the story any further by saying more. If you enjoy intelligent, challenging, beautifully staged and choreographed plays driven by colorful characters, then see this show.

Hindle Wakes plays through February 17th at The Clurman Theatre at Theatre Row (410 West 42nd Street). For more information, visit: MintTheater.org.

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