

War on the Homefront

In the Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "The Subject was Roses", war in the Cleary's house is as virulent and as long-standing as the mar-

Mad About Theatre



by madeleine shaner

riage of Nettie and John, whose vows have outlived their usefulness. Echoes of many domestic battles resound through this cramped little house in the Bronx in the early 1940s. Timmy's homecoming, after three years in the U.S. Army is bound to be a joyful occasion. He's an only child, the light in his mother's eye, and the hope in his father's, it would seem. The scheduled coming home party, re-introducing Timmy, the young man, now 21, to extended family and neighbors, will be a blast that all will remember.

The morning after, however, a lot more than congratulations are in order. The list includes apologies, recriminations, regrets, sour stomachs, blame-sharing, harsh words, violent blasts of anger, hateful language flung around, past fights and battles re-played, and ugly facts revealed. In the harsh light of hangovers, no one comes out looking pure.

"All happy families are alike," Tolstoy wrote, "each unhappy family is unhappy in its' own way." On the day after the happy homecoming, Nettie Cleary (a superb Ferrell Marshall), John Cleary (an excellent Peter Karlin), and Timmy Cleary (a charmingly solid Danny Araujo), are virtually an iconic unhappy family. It quickly becomes clear that this was never a happy family. Old quarrels are revisited, ancient taunts remembered, ill treatment of each other spread out on the table, covers pulled, and masks removed. Timmy quickly comes to realize that making it to 21 may mean becoming a man, but

it also helps him remember that all the old stuff he thought had dissipated in the three years he'd been away was still alive and kicking, and as hateful as he remembered from those nights when he'd lain awake, a small boy, hearing his parents' hateful fighting and screaming.

World War II may be over, but there are battles left to fight in The War of the Clearys, and now, as a presumed adult, Timmy realizes he's become a full-fledged combatant.

This is tough material, to listen to, and to swallow, also to realize, and maybe remember, that even if you're called by your official title of "Mother", "Father", or "Son", you're nevertheless in the fray of some kind of battle, whatever you call it. Marvelous performances all around, and a universal tonality

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that repeats itself every day, among friends, enemies or families, in probably every society in the world, makes this play as relevant as it was in 1964 when it was first produced. It is totally truthful, strong material that makes you think, maybe remember, perhaps fear, as well as laugh, cry, or scream at, but definitely listen and react to, regardless of whether or not it hits a personal nerve.

Superbly directed by award-winning Claudia Jaffee on set designer Stephen Gifford's suitably claustrophobic set. (The set is shared with West Coast Ensemble's production of Stephen Sondheim's "Assassins", which plays on week-end days, through September 28.)

Presented by West Coast Ensemble at their new home at the El Centro Theatre, 800 N. El Centro Avenue, Hollywood. (just north of Melrose Avenue); Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8:00pm, through September 18. (323)460-4443 or www.tix.com.

Walkers and Art Lovers Suit up for LACE 10K

Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), located at 6522 Hollywood Blvd., is asking people to show their support and participate in the LACE 10K Art Walk on Saturday, September 13.

The 10K event is a fundraiser that will take participants on an insider's tour of some of the museums and galleries that have helped bring Los Angeles to the forefront of the international art world. Participants will visit dozens of art spaces throughout Chinatown and the downtown arts district. The event will also feature exclusive access to 1804 Industrial Street, LACE's downtown location, with studio tours of the current residences and a viewing of the Richard Hawkins mural. Free admission and a special walkthrough of the Marlene Dumas exhibition at MOCA is also included, as is a private reception at Bank gallery with artist Dorit Cypis, who will lead participants on an exclusive walkthrough of her show before it opens to the public.

LACE is a nonprofit, contemporary art center that curates and produces art and events that inspire the public imagination, and engage with timely issues that shape local and global life. Participants in the 10K Walk will raise money for LACE by getting sponsorships. Each walker who raises the minimum of \$50 in memberships will receive a complimentary LACE membership, and those who raise more will receive higher levels of membership.

Each walker will also receive an official LACE 10K 2008 T-shirt.

For more information, call (323)957-1777, or visit the website at www.welcometolace.org.

WeHo City Council Trashes Plastic Bags



photo by Richard Settle

The West Hollywood City Council adopted an ordinance on August 18 to ban single use, carryout, shopping plastic bags from grocery and retail establishments within the city. The council directed city staff to institute a "Reusable Shopping Bag" outreach/education program to assist West Hollywood businesses and consumers, allowing them to adjust to the new ordinance, which will take effect next February.

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