

Theater Review: Brown Paper Box Co. Stages Pointed ‘Spike Heels’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 29, 2015 - 3:40pm

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CHICAGO – If you can remember the 1990s outside of childhood, you are in the glow of middle age, so congratulations. The Brown Paper Box Co. theater ensemble takes us back to those thrilling days of yesteryear with “Spike Heels,” a relationship comedy centering on the co-mingling antics of two couples, with a slight nod toward George Bernard Shaw and the play “Pygmalion” (or its musical counterpart, “My Fair Lady”).



Play Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The script of the play is a bit slight and histrionic, but the performances rescue those tendencies, especially the whirling dervish in the center of the action. The character of Georgie is an indecisive-yet-strong character, and is portrayed with exceptional presence and depth by the rising Chicago theater star Jillian Weingart. Flitting from man-to-man, and consequence-to-consequence, Weingart as Georgie becomes the glue which holds the flimsy scenario together.



Edward (Charles Azkenaizer) Encounters Georgie (Jillian Weingart) in ‘Spike Heels’

Photo credit: CB Lindsey for Brown Paper Box Co.

Georgie lives in the same apartment building as Andrew (Jesse Dornan) in 1990 Boston. She has escaped the Bronx and her underachieving family, and Andrew has guided her toward a new career, as an administrative assistant at a law firm. Edward (Charles Azkenaizer) is Andrew’s lawyer friend who hired Georgie, and now wants to seduce her. This causes a rift in all the relationships, including the engagement of Andrew and Lydia (Whitney Morse), and it will take a couple nights of soul searching to work it all out.

The play is set in 1990. but besides the nod to the few odd hairstyles and fashion choices – including the ubiquitous footwear of the title that Georgie wears throughout – this is not a distinctly cultural look back. Georgie is supposedly a low rent type woman in the narrative – as fashioned by playwright Theresa Rebeck in 1992 – who has been “transformed” by Andrew in a Professor-Higgins-in-My-Fair-Lady way, but there is no real indication that he has influenced her one way or the other, besides the job reference and some books that Georgie seems to flip through quickly (despite their complexity). The relationships are a bit annoying, because nobody is closing the deal, and in that sense it does brings us back to being of the age range of the prime breeding – the late twenties/early thirties – where hormonal biology can trump emotional logic and kindness.



The Cast Faces Off in 'Spike Heels'

Photo credit: CB Lindsey for Brown Paper Box Co.

But it is Jillian Weingart that holds it together the most as Georgie, raging up against both Andrew and Charles, both sexually and philosophically. Weingart developed a sense of the character that grows stronger throughout the action, especially towards the end when she knows what she wants. Her dancing scene with the rejected Lydia, portrayed by Whitney Morse, becomes a freestanding shout-out to sisterhood, against the tide of the indecision and horny boys. The costuming (including epic hair) and mannerisms that Weingart developed in Georgie brings her to shimmering life, and she dominates as both the main character and the projector of stage radiance.

The only direct 1990s thing, besides Georgie's choice of dress and hair, was the lack of mobile phone devices and screens that the characters do not have. Which leads to the question, was it easier to communicate back then, or harder? I'll answer that later, I'm receiving a text from the past.

Brown Paper Bag Co. presents 'Spike Heels,' Thursdays through Saturday at 8pm – and Sundays at 3:30pm – through February 8th, 2015, at Raven Theatre, 6157 North Clark in Chicago. [Click here](#) [15] for more information and to purchase tickets. Featuring Jillian Weingart, Jesse Dornan, Charles Askkenaizer and Whitney Morese. Written by Theresa Rebeck. Directed by Stephanie Rohr.



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