

Good Night and Good Luck

'Night, Mother is moving, not preachy

As we ramp up for another hot season of brainless box-office hits, one may despair at the distinct lack of entertainment directed at a more discerning audience. If this sounds like you, then don't miss your chance to catch Theatre Inconnu's latest dramatic masterpiece, *'Night, Mother*.

(Warning: I can't really talk about *'Night, Mother* without spoiling something funda-

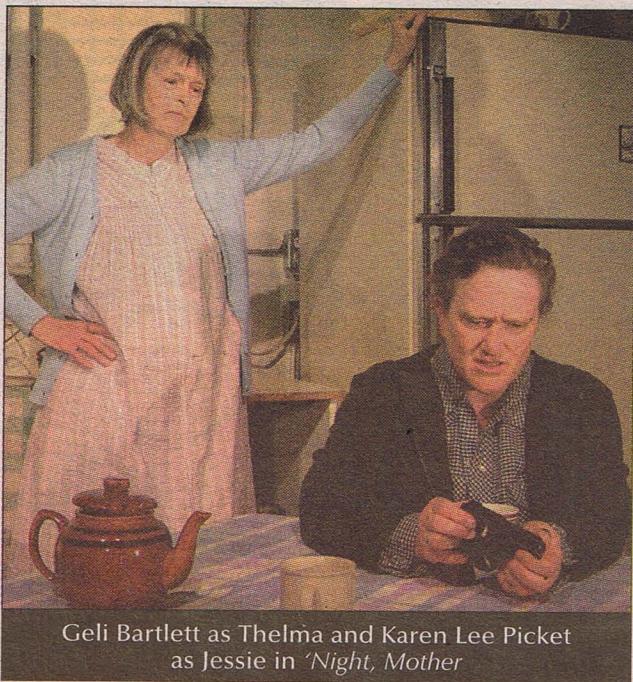
mental to the plot, though you do find it out fairly early. So if you don't want to know, skip to the next paragraph.) Set in the early '80s in a small country town, Jessie (Karen Lee Pickett) is a middle-aged woman living with her mother, Thelma (Geli Bartlet). The play starts with Jessie scouring the house for her father's gun while announcing she'll be using it to kill herself later in the evening. What follows is the fallout of that statement: the shock, pain and anger for both women and Thelma's struggle to understand her daughter and convince her to change her mind. If it sounds intense, it is. It's also intelligent, funny and deeply moving.

Director Clayton Jevne has created a beautifully personal play—and with it one of the most intimate stagings I've ever experienced. You walk past the box office into a room with just a few rows of seats set up directly in front of a small, welcoming kitchen and living room. It's just like your grandma had when you were a kid—complete with floral table cloth, knitting basket and candy dishes scattered about. You feel more like you're sitting down to have tea with the actors rather than observe them in a play.

As for Bartlet and Pickett, well, they're just amazing. They're on stage for an hour and 40 minutes straight (no intermission), dealing with a very intense and emotional subject nonstop and they both make it seem so effortless. They have a great rapport and bring a tremendous energy and life to the stage. A story like *'Night, Mother* could very easily become stagnant and preachy, but Bartlet and Pickett do a

fantastic job keeping the story moving and the audience enraptured by their lives.

I do have one complaint, which is more of a demand of the company. Theatre Inconnu, please, do your audience a favour and find another venue! Sure, the Fernwood Community Association is a versatile spot and you are very creative with the space. And I'm willing to forgive the street noise that filters in through the thin walls and heavy curtains (mostly because your plays are so captivating that I usually tune it out in the first few min-



CLAYTON JEVNE

Geli Bartlett as Thelma and Karen Lee Pickett as Jessie in *'Night, Mother*

utes). But I cannot abide those damn posts that always get in the way of your actors. No matter how you slice your stage, I can't find a seat with a view that isn't obstructed at least some of the time. At times, one of the actors would be completely invisible to me for entire conversations. Surely Victoria has a space with a post-free zone between the stage and the audience? Please, find it!

Annoying structural inconveniences aside, *'Night, Mother* is well worth seeing. It's a heavy play, and will have you thinking about your own family secrets all the way home.

And later that night you may feel the urge to pick up the phone and tell your mom how much you care about her
P.S. Mom, if you're reading this, I love you.

—Sarah Gignac

'Night, Mother
To June 14
Fernwood Community Association,
1923 Fernwood
Tickets \$10-\$12 • 360-0234