

When the Messenger is Hot is adapted by Laura Eason from the book of the same name by Elizabeth Crane. We follow our protagonist(s) Josie 1, 2, and 3 as they traverse through two character arcs: the denial of the death of her mother and the less than perfect relationship they had, as well as the rather ill-fated but hilarious wade through the dating pool. I must admit, conceptual notations are not a strong suit of mine. . . I am too distracted by fractal moments and far off theories rather than solidified concepts. To amend this the best way possible, let me first discuss the more tangible production aspects of the play.

At the forefront I must remember this is a “concert reading”. Not a “staged reading”. Not a “virtual production”. The more production-y aspects I throw into our performance, the more one may question why I had an actor snack on popcorn in one scene, but when we sit down for dinner in another, nary a noodle is in sight. Moderation and holding true to the ideals of a concert styled reading will be important. That being said, I’ve watched several virtual readings from varied companies around the U.S.. Marvelous actors and performers giving their all in a small medium close-up box, energy, inflection and purpose well delivered. Yet, often I become aware of the lack of connection between performers and audience, and at times connections between performers seem hollowed. It is the trap of the internet’s energy draining, flat, white noise. I am confident we will make strides in breaking the filtered connection mentioned above. How exactly will take some thought.... The character’s must stay grounded and real (as real as a dead woman eating cheese sandwich crackers for three years can be), but the energy output will end up being far beyond a normal production of this nature.

The play itself! I believe my favorite part of this play is Josie’s inner monologue literally being two extra characters who are neither different versions or timelines of Josie, but instead a mere self-reflected instantaneous dialogue of self. She is well aware of her lack of “adult” milestones, and downplays her numerous other achievements. The somewhat Grey Gardens like relationship with her mother is very relatable.... Joan the effervescent accomplished opera singer who raised a family and is a notable community member, is also the foul-mouthed reckless driver. She’s the mother who puts hours into knitting her daughter a cardigan, and then when gifting it to her daughter adds judgmental, grudge holding remarks, buttoned with an “I love you!”.

Both Joan and Josie revel in denial. Joan is constantly saying that “she will be fine!” brushing off the need for Josie to worry. The denial becomes Josie’s own when death becomes unacceptable, a mistake, surely just a bit of befuddled paperwork. As we deal with all the aforementioned, we also meet the myriad of men that Josie embarks on relationships with. While I could have fun and mark them up to being the “messengers” ala ghosts of Christmas past, present and future, (the college boy being Josie’s reach towards the youth she never was, the animal abusing drug user being the present problems she chooses to ignore and make excuses for, and the NY man being the prospect that she is worthy and deserving of meaningful relationships in life no matter her past) I shall refrain from draping them in such prophetic robes. However! They are indeed an integral part to our Josie, and her traversing to acceptance of her mother’s death and her own self-worth.

Lastly, I must mention it is the dark realist comedy that keeps this play afloat. Timing, and intent will be important in creating that wonderful release from any tension built prior. You know, that wonderful, stored energy becoming a kinetic energy thing. Here’s to a good race.