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THEATER REVIEW | 'AN OCTOPUS LOVE STORY'

Rumpled Sheets and Notions Among Strange Bedfellows

By [JASON ZINOMAN](#)

An unlikely affair is the most likely thing imaginable in a romantic comedy, but the match in “An Octopus Love Story,” Delaney Britt Brewer’s drama that comes on strong before settling into the rhythm of a sitcom, does have an unusual twist.

Danny (Josh Tyson) and Jane (Kelli Holsopple) are gay, and their romance began as a completely platonic political protest against the ban on gay marriage. Danny’s friend Alex (Michael Cyril Creighton) and Jane’s partner Tosh (Jenny Greer) cooked up the idea of total strangers getting married, but had no idea that their openly gay guinea pigs in this political gesture would fall for each other.

Sparks start to fly soon after a Christian activist (Andrew Dawson), posing as a journalist interested in an article, attacks this attractive and apathetic pair, suggesting that their sexuality is merely a product of their environment. What luck. This confrontation could create just the kind of controversy that draws attention to the cause. You would think that Danny and Jane would be happy, and they would be if this play relied on logic as opposed to a formula. You see, something needs to get this unusual couple together, and this conservative true believer, a familiar caricature who drops at least one totally unbelievable bombshell, serves as an excellent plot device.

Ms. Brewer cares for these characters, and she has moments of wit, but her labored dialogue sounds altogether too polished. Would anyone outside of a Victorian novel actually say something like, “I don’t want them to know the business of my heart”? That is Ms. Holsopple’s Jane, and she emotes breathlessly.

As soon as the pair start to flirt, the play, staged with a moseying pace by Mike Klar, becomes strictly by the book. They bond through watching a movie (“Strange Bedfellows,” with [Rock Hudson](#)), repeating the lines to each other while dramatically acting it out. They share private moments. There’s the big kiss and before long, he’s coming home late, and she’s wondering: What ever happened to sex? As for the political activism, that was really just to serve their friends’ egos, and it’s soon forgotten along with any chance that this rote play might have something interesting or provocative to say.

Trust matters as much in romantic comedy as it does in romance. A play can tease you with a good idea, but if it strains credibility and repeats the same old lines, it’s easy to lose interest. “Octopus” is that kind of date.

“An Octopus Love Story” runs through May 20 at Center Stage, 48 West 21st Street, Chelsea, (212) 868-4444.

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