


Review: ROBBIN, FROM THE HOOD at The Road Theatre On Magnolia

 broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/Review-ROBBIN-FROM-THE-HOOD-at-The-Road-Theatre-On-Magnolia-20241024

By Harker Jones



The Road Theatre's 2024–2025 season opener, Marlow Wyatt's *ROBBIN, FROM THE HOOD*, is a smart and sensitive look at two kids in the projects of an unnamed tropical American city who strive for more only to learn how hard the world is.

Seventeen-year-old math genius Robbin (iesha m. daniels) lives with her Grandpa Percy (William L. Warren) who both utilizes a wheelchair and is slowly losing his grip on reality due to dementia. When she and her BFF/partner in crime, Juan (a vivacious Enrike Llamas), receive an opportunity for a paid internship at the multi-billion-dollar corporation Kennedy Global, they jump at the chance, thinking it's their Golden Ticket out of the 'hood. When that gold starts to tarnish, it sets them on a divided path that illustrates them at both their best and their worst.

Wyatt's "She," which played at the Antaeus Theatre Company in the autumn of 2023, shared a similar setup with a smart young Black female protagonist who dreams of a better life with the aid of a male friend, but while that was lyrical and dreamy, *ROBBIN, FROM THE HOOD* is harder, harsher, more based in the realities of the real world. Wyatt's characters are still sharply drawn, though, each with their own distinct arcs. Even the villains have depth and complexity, making their choices, if not acceptable, understandable.

daniels and Llamas have an easy chemistry. Robbin is a hothead, full of vigor and vinegar, all teenage angst and anger. daniels eases into the role, coming off a bit rushed at the beginning so it's difficult to make out her dialogue. Llamas has an open face that is perfect for Juan's expansive hopefulness, his energy dynamic and determined. Rob Nagle and Geri-Nikole Love as corporate stooge Kyle and steely acquisitions recruiter Margaret, respectively, are pros, making acting look easy.



Enrike Llamas and William L. Warren

Director Chuma Gault helms the show with a sure hand, moving the action swiftly, especially considering the small space of the stage. He is helped exponentially by the set design by Amanda Knehans, which is simple but effective — establishing Robbin's flat, the Kennedy Global offices, a metropolitan bus, and more — especially paired with the projection design by Nicholas Santiago, which provides both interiors and exteriors — Robbin's neighborhood, a prison (where Robbin's Uncle Charlie [a sympathetic Joshua R. Lamont] is serving time), the city — expanding Robbin and Juan's world as they venture into it wide-eyed and innocent.

The intent of the play is clear: Corporate America is evil (it is), it strives to maintain its place by keeping others down (like it's a sentient being, the workers only cogs, which they are), and it is a prison of its own, a gilded cage where the price to survive may not cost your life, but it just might cost your humanity. Whether Robbin and Juan lose their own isn't irrelevant, but it also isn't the point. The point is that we need to stand up for what's right, particularly in an election year like this one, where more hangs in the balance than ever before.



Joshua R. Lamont
and William L. Warren

The Road never shies away from challenging and provocative projects — which is much the intent of theater — and ROBBIN, FROM THE HOOD does not shy away from its own challenging and provocative material. It makes you think, and the world needs more of that these days.

Photos by Lizzy Kimball

ROBBIN, FROM THE HOOD is performed at the Road Theatre, 10747 Magnolia Boulevard in North Hollywood, through November 17. Tickets are available at RoadTheatre.org or by calling (818) 761-8838.

Comments

From This Author - Harker Jones

Harker Jones has worked in publishing as a writer, editor, and critic for 15 years. He was managing editor of Out magazine for seven years and has written two novels (including the best-selling love story Until September) and ten screenplays. His short thrillers Cole & Colette and One-Hit Wonder have been accepted into more than 60 film festivals, winning several awards. He has a double-major in telecommunications and film and written communication and a minor in literature from Eastern Michigan University, is a member of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle, and is a card-carrying member of Mensa.