

Review: “Robbin, from the Hood” at Road Theatre Company

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From left: iesha m. daniels (Robbin) and Enrike Llamas (Juan) in "Robbin, from the Hood" at Road Theatre Company (Photo by Lizzy Kimball)

Road Theatre Company’s “Robbin, from the Hood” opens with an elderly Percy Woods (William L. Warren) browsing TV channels from his wheelchair. He changes the channels, frustrated by the news, corporate ads, and more news before he finally settles on his favorite Western.

Before Percy can enjoy this respite from reality, Robbin Woods (iesha m. daniels [sic.]) bursts onto the stage. A 17-year-old math genius, Robbin is preparing for her first day in a job training program with her closest friend, Juan (Enrike Llamas). We quickly learn that

Robbin's parents are gone, her Uncle Charlie (Joshua R. Lamont) is in prison, and Robbin is left to care for herself and her grandfather Percy.



From left: William L. Warren (Percy) and Enrike Llamas (Juan) in "Robbin, from the Hood" at Road Theatre Company (Photo by Lizzy Kimball)

Robbin and Juan embark on a journey, from their bleak surroundings in the "hood" to the shining promise of success in the business world. They meet Margaret Brown (Geri-Nikole Love), a savvy corporate manager who prepares them for the fast-paced, cutthroat world they are about to enter.

From there, "Robbin, From the Hood" is ambitious in its scope. Playwright Marlow Wyatt makes clear connections between Robbin's employment, exploitative corporate practices, the prison-industrial complex, restorative justice and family legacy. The play paints a portrait of the lived experience for millions of Americans living in poverty.



From left: Joshua R. Lamont (Charlie) and William L. Warren (Percy) in "Robbin, from the Hood" at Road Theatre Company (Photo by Lizzy Kimball)

Though the story is inspired by the classic tale of "Robin Hood," the similarities are mostly superficial. That said, each scene is dynamic and full of energy, thanks to well-written dialogue and great acting.

daniels gives an energetic and nuanced performance as Robbin. Her acting chops are on full display, from maternal caretaker to playful teenager, foulmouthed bus commuter to polished corporate employee.

Robbin embodies a modern struggle for a young Black woman in America. What does it mean to be successful in a world of corporate greed? How does one take care of their family without participating in a system that harms your community?



Geri-Nikole-Love (Margaret) and Iesha M. Daniels (Robbin) in "Robbin, from the Hood" at Road Theatre Company (Photo by Lizzy Kimball)

Love is another standout performer as Margaret, a harsh yet sympathetic taskmaster. Margaret's story is compelling, exploring the humanity of business politics and serving as a cautionary tale about the costs of fighting the system from the inside.

The rest of the small cast is full of talent. Warren gives a heartfelt performance as Percy, Robbin's curmudgeon of a grandfather. Sometimes stubborn and independent, other times vulnerable, Warren handles the character with care and skill.

And Llamas is a perfect fit for energetic Juan, with whom Robbin is seemingly attached at the hip. Juan and Robbin are so good as best friends, you can't help but want to be the third pea in their pod.



Enrike Llamas (Juan) and William L. Warren (Percy) in "Robbin, from the Hood" at Road Theatre Company (Photo by Lizzy Kimball)

The Road Theatre Company stage is intimate. Set designer Amanda Knehans uses projections and walls of metal frames on hinges that work together to give the feeling of each location – inside, outside or even in prison.

And Director Chuma Gault's clever blocking uses all parts of the stage and more to give the audience an immersive experience. Each scene change is accompanied by music, a medley of modern Hip-Hop classics that even a casual listener would recognize. The result is a show that, despite the close quarters of the theater, feels expansive.

"Robbin, from the Hood" continues at The Road Theatre Company, 10747 Magnolia Blvd., North Hollywood, through Nov. 17, with shows Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$39, \$25 for seniors and \$17 for students. For tickets and information, call the box office at (818) 761-8838 or visit RoadTheatre.org. Run time is 2 hours, with a 15-minute intermission.