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The Goat, the Love that Dare Not...

By GEORGE WALKER
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Stevie, Glynnis Kunkel-Ruiz, Billy, Josh Hogan and Martin, Jay c. Hemphill

I'm George Walker. The IU Theatre presents Edward Albee's controversial play from 2002, *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* December 1st through the 8th in the Wells-Metz Theatre.

Martin, Jay Hemphill, is a very successful architect with a long-standing marriage to Stevie, Glynnis Kunkel-Ruiz, the love of his life. Ross, Michael Bayler is a TV interviewer and a longtime friend of Martin and Stevie. Billy, Josh Hogan, is Martin and Stevie's high school age son. Martin has recently begun a powerfully romantic and physically consummated affair with a goat.

Stevie smells it on his hands and Martin off handedly reveals it to her, but it's only later when his confidential friend Ross makes it clear in a letter to her that the full impact begins to be felt.

If you go to see *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* in the production potently directed by Murray McGibbon and well acted by all, I'd suggest taking a partner or a friend. I was by myself and bent the ear of a colleague in the parking afterwards for more time than her ride home wished for. You're going to want to talk about the show afterwards.

Edward Albee has thought deeply about these characters and he doesn't let any of them "off the hook" in the drama. Jay Hemphill's Martin is fifty and though he blames his memory problems on aging and jokes about Alzheimer's we're left to wonder later, if his affair isn't taking a physical toll. Also, although he's apparently OK with his son Billy's homosexuality, he treats the boy as if he were eight or nine and later let's some real angry low blows out.

Martin's friend Ross from his plaid jacket and pants in contrast to Martin's more conservative outfit and prep school tie seems a bit jealous of his friend's success. Ross is occupying a bit lower rung on society's ladder and he's on his second marriage. He dose lean on their

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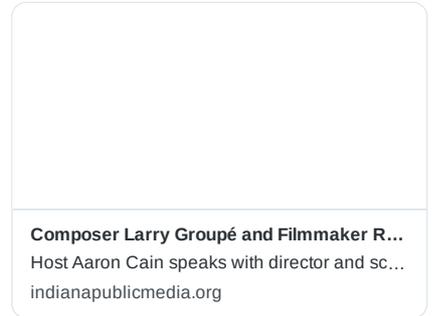


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perhaps envious desire to share it with Stevie.

Glynnis Kunkel-Ruiz's Stevie, has *The Goat's*... most complicated journey. In her own quite glamorous way, she fights the hardest to understand what she can't understand and even to fully embrace it. When we first meet Stevie, she's a wealthy, tasteful wife living in a beautifully appointed modern home with a successful husband and a funny and fun loving son. She's tolerant of her son and indulgent of her husband. The couple even does mock Noel Coward routines that the director keeps from being too slick. The letter from Ross detailing Martin's affair is a shock, but Stevie works as hard as she can to deal with it.

In the couple's confrontation Martin keeps repeating the fairy tale country story of the beginning of his affair that he shared with Ross and begging that she understand . Like Ross, she finds it unbelievable, repulsive and beyond any understanding that she can muster. Stevie tries to take the tragedy out by talking, ripping a painting, smashing porcelain, and primally screaming. By the play's end, she's fought as hard as she can to cope with what she finds beyond her understanding.

Josh Hogan has a difficult part to play as Martin and Stevie's son Billy and Hogan does a good job with it. It's the high school aged son who given orders to "go to your room" by both indulgent parents. He's adored by his mother whom he appreciates and tolerated by his father, whom he loves.

The set design of the tastefully appointed geometrical black and white open living room by Chris Mueller simply pops out in the Wells-Metz. Jason Orlenko costumes, from the contrast between Martin and Ross, the up-scale grace of Stevie and the pretty look for Billie all work.

As the lights go down on the final scene, Martin and Stevie are in heartbroken tears. A subdued Ross looks on and Billy seems to see that this is something he's going to live with for a long time and I'm betting that if you're there to see it, you're going to want to talk about it later.

The IU Department of Theatre and Drama and Contemporary Dance's production of Edward Albee's *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?* (*Notes Toward a Definition of Tragedy*) plays through Saturday December 8

At the theatre for you, I'm George Walker

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