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The Lion in Winter

presented by The Psych Drama Company
hosted by Theatre Company of Saugus

June 10 - 19, 2022

Co-directed by Wendy Lippe and Larry Segel

**"THE LION IN WINTER" STAGED BY
PSYCH DRAMA COMPANY, HOSTED BY
THEATRE COMPANY OF SAUGUS (SAUGUS,
MA.) - REVIEW**

**by Kevin T. Baldwin, American Theater
Critics Association**

While some may feel imprisoned by ongoing inflation, supply shortages and skyrocketing gas prices, Psych Drama Company offers a brief respite from today's grief with an intensely entertaining production of James Goldman's "The Lion in Winter."

While the play wants to fool us into thinking it has a Shakespearean texture, Goldman's dialogue shares a cutting dry wit closer to Noel Coward than the Bard.

While clearly a drama, there are many humorous moments in this production that also is staged to be "immersive" (whereby the actors seem to repeatedly "break the fourth wall" speaking their lines directly to the audience as if we are on the stage in the scene with them).

A simply marvelous approach as co-directed by **Wendy Lippe** and **Larry Segel** that yields impressive results and a far more atmospheric intimacy with the content of **Goldman's** material.

As the play opens, it is Christmas, 1183. We are seated around and inside the esteemed castle of blustery King Henry II of England (**Brian Dion**).

Henry's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine (**Wendy Lippe**), arrives from exile as Henry had her imprisoned 10 years earlier.

It is clear their relationship is adversarial from the outset, yet there is an inconsistent, underlying but occasionally endearing quality to both thanks to the balanced performances by **Dion** and **Lippe**.

This is a couple that not only loves to hate one another, they literally seem to hate still loving one another, even though Henry seeks a new bride in the extremely young Alais (**Caitlin Cremins**)...whose expression in the provided photo below seemingly speaks for many of us at the prospect of such a marriage.



*Caitlin Cremins and Brian Dion in a scene from "The Lion in Winter," presented by Psych Drama Company and hosted by the Theatre Company of Saugus, now playing in Saugus, MA. through June 19, 2022.
Photo by William Stofega.*

Alais is a French Princess who is Philip's half-sister but has been living at Henry's castle since she was betrothed to Richard at age eight.

Such is the delicate tightrope walk teetering high above the precipices of the two traditional drama masks ("Comedy" vs. "Tragedy") as capably represented throughout **Goldman's** play.

We also meet Henry's three competitive sons: Richard Lionheart (**Richie DeJesus**), the oldest and clearly most ambitious; Geoffrey (**Zachary D. McConnell**), the conniving albeit overlooked middle son; and John (**Michael Mazzone**), the immature youngest.

Prodded by Eleanor's manipulative intervening, a contest ensues between all members of the squabbling royal family and guest of the kingdom, Phillip II, the King of France (**Norman Dubois**).



Zachary D. McConnell as "Geoffrey" and Michael Mazzone as "John" from "The Lion in Winter," presented by Psych Drama Company hosted by the Theatre Company of Saugus, now playing in Saugus, MA. through June 19, 2022. Photo by William Stofega.

The performances of the actors portraying the sibling brothers and the visiting King are all well defined and executed.

However, it is clearly the on-stage relationship between Henry and Eleanor that is at the heart of the story and it is both **Dion** and **Lippe** that deliver the most layered and insightful performances. **Dion** is especially domineering on stage as the regal Henry.

Throughout **Goldman's** dialogue, the brothers incessant feuding is fueled by Henry and Eleanor's mischievous competition. This leaves the audience with not one sympathetic character nor any character to root for, with the possible exception of the naïve Alais.

Cremins is good in the role of Alais but seemingly lacks that element of naïveté, almost coming across more mischievous than naïve. This may also be a result of her character, again as scripted by **Goldman**, being limited primarily to react to the behavior of the others in scenes.

The sheltered Alais, ultimately, is used as nothing more than a pawn by the others, leaving very little for the actress to work with as far as material is concerned.

However, Alais does figure, quite prominently, as an obvious potential threat to the relationship between Henry and Eleanor.



Wendy Lippe and Zachary D. McConnell from "The Lion in Winter," by Psych Drama Company and hosted by the Theatre Company of Saugus, now playing in Saugus, MA. through June 19, 2022. Photo by William Stofega.

Not so obvious is the ultimate relationship between Henry and Eleanor, which appears acrimonious at best, pathetic at worst, yet riveting throughout the two and half hour production.

It is this relationship that keeps one delightfully guessing until the very end if their dangerous liaison and cruel intention toward one another will ultimately fall into either the depths of comedy or tragedy.

Costumes by Amanda Allen, Lippe and Vanessa Phelon were all resplendent and well-conducive to the time period.

Kevin T. Baldwin

American Theater Critics Association, Metrmag

[Read this article on Metrmag >](#)

While rehearsing the *Lion in Winter* when theaters were closed, an audio radio-play version was recorded, and that was streamed in December 2020. [Click here to read rave press reviews of the radio play](#), and an exclusive press interview including discussion of the journey of the show from radio drama to fully realized production.

[Visit the Theatre Company of Saugus page for more details >](#)

The Lion in Winter Performances:

- Friday, June 10 at 8:00 PM
- Saturday, June 11 at 8:00 PM
- Sunday, June 12 at 3:00 PM (matinee)
- Friday, June 17 at 8:00 PM
- Saturday, June 18 at 8:00 PM
- Sunday, June 19 at 3:00 PM (matinee)

ALL TICKETS = \$25

How to Purchase Tickets:

Advance online sales, using any major credit card, are open until four hours before the curtain time. If available, seats can be purchased at the door for the same price, using cash, check, Venmo, or PayPal, but no credit cards. Ticket prices are the same for all patrons.

[Advanced Ticket Sales >](#)



The Psych Drama Company's mission is to examine theatrical works through a psychological lens. We produce emotionally powerful, immersive, thought-provoking theater. With our world being as fast-paced and technology-driven as it is, the company seeks to hold space for the public to meaningfully reflect on their lives and relationships in new ways. Psych Drama's unique integration of theater and psychology facilitates the creation of that space.

"In particular, our approach to immersive theater activates strong feelings and physical reactions in audience members because they are no longer merely spectators. And the psychologists who lead post-show discussions are trained to hold space in ways that facilitate reflection and processing of those reactions; the result can be transformative. Immersive theater and psychology – a marriage that has the power to activate, hold, metabolize and transform."

– Wendy Lippe , Ph.D., Producing Artistic Director

[**More About The Psych Drama Company >**](#)



COVID Safety Policy Update

Although policies about wearing masks and providing proof of vaccination have been loosening up in many places, in theaters we still must ensure the safety of our patrons, members, actors, and crew, by minimizing the risk of contagion. Our home at the Saugus American Legion is not large and social distancing is not possible.

Therefore we will continue to require our audience to wear masks inside (unless actively eating or drinking), and to be vaccinated. All the cast members of our shows are vaccinated, will be masked during rehearsals, and will be tested prior to performances.

This is especially important for this production as there will be immersive seating and audience and cast will be VERY close to each other.

THE PSYCH DRAMA COMPANY
PRESENTS

THE
LION
IN
WINTER

BY
JAMES
GOLDMAN

DIRECTED BY
LARRY SEGEL &
WENDY LIPPE



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The Psych Drama Company, Inc. is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to stimulating and fostering reflection and psychological mindedness through the performing arts. The Psych Drama Company provides education on a wide range of topics in psychology by combining immersive, experiential performances with post-show discussions led by mental health professionals.



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