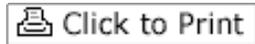


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# Wife Swappers

at the Zephyr Theatre

Reviewed by Jon Steely

July 30, 2009

George Bush, the love of Jesus, patriotism, the institution of heterosexual marriage, right-wing conservatism, and couples playing switcheroo with multiple sex partners are all present and accounted for in writer-director Justin Tanner's comedic one-act indictment of the hypocritical truth that sometimes lurks behind the cloak of good, old-fashioned, middle-class American values. Tanner's promiscuous farce plays as a nice meditation on how some flag-waving, churchgoing Americans have a way of preaching wholesome values and morals, only to abandon them the minute a crazy little thing called lust comes around.

Tanner's plot is pretty straightforward: Middle-aged, God-fearing couple Jake (Jon Palmer) and Lorette (Mary Scheer) invite younger couple Paul (Cody Chappel) and Karen (Chloe Taylor) to their Orange County digs for a fun night of swinging and swapping. Karen is uptight and out of her element, but Paul doesn't let her discomfort interfere with his thirst for carnal experimentation. Enter Jake and Lorette's Republican swinger pals Gina (Melissa Denton) and Mac (Michael Halpin), a married couple as happy to swing as they are to praise the Lord. Things slip and slide along nicely until the party is deflated by the surprise appearance of Paul's slacker friend Roy (Todd Lowe), who shares a fantasy that is deemed blasphemous by the very group that sees bending over their good friends' spouses as perfectly acceptable behavior.

Taylor turns in sensational work, superbly personifying discomfort and serving as

the play's only bastion of guilt and conscience. Denton, whose delivery recalls Megan Mullally's work on "Will & Grace," and Halpin, with his turned-up collar and suburban, pseudo-stud swagger, are a hoot as they provide most of the show's big laughs. Lowe's excellent and authentic performance arrives at the perfect moment, making a welcome splash just as the sex-toy gags start to wear off and leave things stagnant.

Tanner has a deep understanding of his characters and a seemingly effortless knack for compelling and funny dialogue. "Wife Swappers" offers a panoramic look at how hypocrisy is every bit as American as baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and coveting thy neighbor's wife.

*Presented by and at the Zephyr Theatre, 7456 Melrose Ave., L.A.  
July 11–Aug. 8. Fri.–Sat., 8 p.m.  
(323) 960-4443.*

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