

Play Dates

Elephant Theatre

Reviewed by Jose Ruiz

Sam Wolfson and Bryan Fogel wrote and produced the mega smash *Jewtopia* back in 2003. Wolfson is back again, this time penning *Play Dates*, a very funny look at relationships beginning with five year old kids and evolving to an adult couple attempting to connect with someone for a sexual ménage à trios.

Wolfson's premise is very simple. Relationships seldom work. He underscores his theme with a barrelful of hilarious situations that prompt avalanches of laughter from the audience, especially the scenes where pre-school kids begin exploring the concept of boy friend – girl friend interactions.



Elizabeth Bond - Rob Nagle

The play is in three short acts; *Boy Meets Girl*, *Dr. Love* and *Honeymoon Period* with each segment riddled by absurdity and mirth. At first, when Sam meets Stacey in the playground they don't exactly know what to do or say, so when Stacey asks Sam – "what do you do?" he answers nervously – "I eat paste". The next day when she chastises him for not calling her, Sam sheepishly answers – "I forgot how to use the phone". The best scene is a ballet – a sort of love dance where they affirm their affection – kind of (these are five year old kids, after all). In the hands of most actors this would be funny, but when Rob Nagle gets hold of it, the laugh meter shoots beyond the strata. Nagle is a master of comic timing, and he brings an arsenal of expressions and faces that convince the skeptics that this is an overgrown five year old dunked in a wading pool far beyond his comprehension.

Elizabeth Bond makes Stacey a flirty, precocious cutie that has already learned the fine art of manipulating little boys. She taunts, she teases, she tantalizes Sam, but when Timmy shows up with a jazzy looking Big Wheel bike, it's bye bye Sam and hello Timmy!

In *Dr. Love*, Sam is all grown up and has become a best selling author, writing a book on failed relationships. He also hosts a show where people call Dr. Love with their romance problems and he tries to minister advice. Again, Nagle stretches easily to create a devastating caricature of all the "Doctors" on the air. Dr. Phil and Dr. Laura, watch out!

The *Honeymoon Period* is a dilemma between Mike and Katie who after five years of marriage have lost the excitement of the first few months and are trying to find ways to rekindle their love. Brian Monahan is perfect as the sort of geeky, confused husband who wants to please his wife but has no clue as to how to do it while Kristen Lee Kelly plays the wife with nervous angst and compulsive determination.

Resolute to bring back the early excitement of the marriage, she calls Dr. Love, who tells her not to be afraid to experiment. What better way to experiment than to bring in a third person to the bedroom? They search in bars, they explore and finally find Brooke, a looker (that's Looker – with an "L") who is more than willing to participate in the experiment (Elizabeth Bond).



Kristen Lee Kelly - Brian Monahan

The result is a lot more than any of them were expecting, providing some titillating situations that bring another round of laughs to an appreciative audience.

Beside the obvious premise that men and women have difficulties with relationships, Wolfson's story is played strictly for laughs. The excellent cast delivers on all counts and Jennifer Chambers' minimalist set and direction helps to focus the action on the characters and their antics. This Green Beetle production may not reach the level of Jewtopia, but it has plenty going for it and is easily one of the funniest comedies of the season.

Recommended.

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Plays through August 1, 2010

The Elephant Stages
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Reservations
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