

Ivoryton Playhouse Production Entertaining and Wonderfully Memorable

By June S. April

A one-person show can be extraordinary, **if** the material is interesting and the character portrayed, **credible**. Ivoryton's current production "Marilyn... Forever Blonde," achieved both. What with some intriguing revelations revealed by the research of writer Greg Thompson and the remarkable portrayal by actress Sunny Thompson (they are married), this show is both entertaining and "educational."

It is also rather fascinating that the Director, Stephanie SHINE and the Star, SUNNY Thompson have names that add a note of warmth to this heartwarming show.

To capture the essence of Marilyn Monroe so perfectly is quite a feat in itself, but then to stage it so audiences are captivated, is no small feat ! Opening with Marilyn on a bed, naked (or so it seemed) but sensually wrapped in a white (satin?) sheet giving a photographic/interview was a most creative way of beginning this show. Her words, her songs were masterfully executed by Sunny Thompson and this show would be popular anywhere in the world.

Credit to set designer Jason Phillips' imaginative, creative intellect that brings the audience into *Marilyn's* world. The scenic lay-out and allows "easy" physical transitions from different times in Monroe's life. The dominantly white sets, both opaque or transparent exude the sensuality that defined Marilyn Monroe's persona. Woody Woodburn's lighting only enhanced the mood of each scene; another kudo well-deserved. The costumes by Mimi Countryman and Alice Worthy (the names of those involved beg of Dickensian thinking) could not have been any more perfect, and allowed *Marilyn* to change/dress behind the opaque, yet somewhat revealing "shoji-screen on stage in relative rapid-fire speed.

The only "loss" felt by this reviewer is the absence of *Monroe* singing the Happy Birthday tune, in a skin-tight dress to President John Kennedy. That breathy rendition might have also been because the dress she wore was so tight that it was necessary to sew her into it, almost as a second skin. Though this reviewer found the play terrific, it was a little too long, with her neediness stated repeatedly.

It is a poignant story. Marilyn Monroe's life was filled with adulation, doubt, growth and wonder. Her childhood was tragic.....orphaned and then in over 9 foster homes. In spite of rejections, the fickle nature of celebrity and the loss of 3 pregnancies she persevered, never letting go of her dreams of stardom, respect, motherhood and true love .

"Marilyn...Forever Blonde" is a production one can happily recommend to others, and keep in the column of plays one was fortunate to see.