

I had a great time last weekend, watching "Becky Shaw," a snappy, contemporary comedy by Gina Gianfriddo, produced by the Centenary Stage Company. What was the worst blind date you ever had? Almost everybody has had one, but it probably didn't equal the one in this play. Just to give you a taste, Max comments about Becky, his blind date, "This woman is not my equal." Tells you something, doesn't it?

Max is a creep. But Becky isn't exactly Mother Theresa. She is a champion at manipulation, a passive-aggressive genius. And in the balance, there is also the fragile marriage of Suzanna and Andrew, the matchmakers. Lending a brilliantly acerbic tone by way of a commentary that functions as a sort-of Greek chorus is Susan, mother of Suzanna, who is struggling with multiple sclerosis, a dwindling bank balance and a questionable romantic relationship.

The production is bright and fast-moving. It's funny and engrossing, beautifully directed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett, with dead-on performances by Terence MacSweeney (Max), Suzanne Kimball (Becky), Alycia M. Kunkle (Suzanna), Aaron Mateson (Andrew), and especially Catherine Rust (Susan). Rust, co-director of CSC, has one of those gorgeous deep voices we usually associate with British actresses, and the ability to infuse the most seemingly innocent remark with acid. Her timing is exquisite.

Also plaudits to Jordan Janota for the outstanding set design, something CSC always does beautifully.



Shelia Abrams
writer for NJ Arts Maven