



The Shadow Box

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In this compelling dramatic triptych, three terminal cancer patients dwell in separate cottages on a hospital grounds. The three are attended and visited by family and close friends: Agnes and her mother Felicity, estranged further by the latter's dementia; Brian and Beverly whose marital complications are exacerbated by Brian's new lover, Mark; and Joe and Maggie, unready for the strain of Joe's impending death and its effect on their teenage son.

The Shadow Box Details

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Drake Shadwell says

Incredibly emotionally deep play. Very clear that the play builds to each of the characters having their own monologue/personal scene that highlights how they are dealing with the grief. In the end, that is what the play is about. The way people show how they are feeling versus what is really going on inside in these times of great emotional turmoil. Incredibly exploration of the way humans deal with these dark parts of what it means to be alive.

Tiffany says

I absolutely love this script. I am performing as Maggie in a cut version of this show for a One Act play and I absolutely love it.

For character development purposes I have read the full version of this script many times over and I completely recommend it as a read or a view. It is completely depressing and it will make you cry but as with most sad things, there are some really funny and beautiful moments here.

It's a very artistic show in the way that things all happen at once and especially in the structure of the final monologue and I would definitely recommend it for those who enjoy very original dramatic pieces.

Julian Dunn says

Considering taking a role in a production of this play in the fall, so I bought it -- and it's very powerful. Can't wait to take it on.

Karen says

For sure not an easy read, but an interesting play. I got into the story of mother and daughter--loyal daughter caring for her dying mother, always sacrificing, always overshadowed, never appreciated. Yep, it's a hard read.

I played said mother, Felicity. It was the best work I ever did on stage. I don't know why. I guess spiteful, blind old women just fit with me. Scary.

The daughter's name was Agnes.

Sarah Sammis says

It's a bit of a depressing play but worth the read. Those who are left behind when loved ones die often have a harder time at letting go than those who are actually dying and that's what this play addresses.

Eric says

A play about death. By focusing on three dying people and their loved ones, it illustrates the five stages of dying identified by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. But it also focuses on the idea that, while dying, people are still living. Enjoy every sandwich, as Warren Zevon said. Very affecting.

I'm giving it a second reading before auditions tonight.

Lauren says

A highly stylized, artificial situation manages to avoid being heavy handed and instead delves into the crux of mortality and how we cope when loved ones are terminally ill.

The set up for this Pulitzer-Prize winning veers towards the ridiculous: A camp were people go to die, and the various characters are interviewed to talk about how they feel and reveal salient plot points. It's an idea that could have gone very badly – and it does feel very much of the late '70s / early '80s with its embrace of psychoanalysis – but once the play establishes its artifice, the story settles into the simplicity of human emotions. I'm still not sure it would resonate with most, but for a modernist play, it remains grounded in human emotion and experience. Recommended.

Michelle says

Another play that I read and then was cast in. It is a beautiful, tragic, sometimes harsh play about death (and life). I recommend it even if you aren't familiar with Kubler-Ross' theories about death.

Gary says

Fantastic! Will be directing it in September.

Matt says

I had the great privilege of doing a scene from this play and playing the wonderful role of Brian. Every word in this one is filled to the brim with purpose and life.

Liz says

I really love this show/script. I was lucky enough to be introduced to this show through my college being a

member of the stage crew. There are three cabins at this retreat home for terminally ill patients and their families. Each family is different: an old women and her daughter, a heterosexual couple and their son, and a homosexual couple and their drunk friend. The show goes through the emotions of each character and their families coping with the fact that they are dying.

Sherry (sethurner) says

The Shadow Box won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1977. The play is set in an unnamed hospital with cottages for the terminally ill, and centers on three people (Joe, Brian, Felicity) dying of unnamed illnesses, and their families. The stories are separate, braided together through the device of an unseen interviewer who allows the patients and family members to voice their inner thoughts and fears not exposed in other dialog.

The idea is that everybody dies, that very few people want to acknowledge or accept it, and that it's important to come to grips with mortality. Nothing new here.

The strength of this play, for me, is the relationships that develop among the dying and their loved ones. There is a father, wife and teenage son, a man and his former wife and current male lover, a mother and daughter. Almost everyone in an audience would find some sort of relationship with which to identify. Anger, laughter, deceit, honesty, all are explored.

There are weaknesses too. To some extent the play is dated. Thanks to hospice organizations, people no longer must die in an institution. The dialog is peppered with profane language which in some cases might be realistic with angry and terrified characters, but often it feels gratuitous here. And the unseen interviewer seemed artificial, an obvious and slightly ominous device to expose what characters are thinking.

Still, I think seeing this play performed by sensitive actors would make for a moving and thought-provoking experience.

Vickie says

A play that is not only very well-written, but oh so poignant for me. Emmy and her circle of close and best friends performed it in their senior year at high school. What a gift they fashioned for themselves and their audiences, to close out an excellent high school career - they did it powerfully, compassionately, and with love, together.

Jordan says

The Play shadow box by Michael Christopher was a sad play with out a happy ending. At some points in the play the reader just keeps wondering ok when is something going to happen. The start of the play is a little bit confusing because it switches between many people such as joe then brian and this is all going on while talking to "Voice of Interviewer". At some points in the play though the reader really feels for these families. The book in my opinion is that it could have been a bit more fast paced but in the end it was a very good play. I would reccomend it for readers everywhere.

Mary says

I highly recommend this play. I fell in love with it. I performed a scene from it with my friend. The character I played, Beverly, is the ex-wife of a dying patient, Brian. The scene involves Brian's BOYFRIEND, Mark, and Beverly discussing the hardships of falling in love and Mark's struggle to take care of him. In reality, they are both equally afraid to lose him.
