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## CAFÉ VARIATIONS A FRESH ACT AT PLAYHOUSE THEATER



A stage becomes a bistro this weekend with SITI Company's touring version of its play, Café Variations (<http://www.siti.org/content/production/cafe-variations-small-version>), a part of the ongoing UW World Series (<http://uwworldseries.org/>).

The smaller Jones Playhouse



(<http://www.modeisfashion.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Siti-Company-Cafe-Variations-2-credit-Michael-Brosilow.jpg>)  
*Almost all smiles throughout the night. Photo credit: Michael Brosilow*

(<http://www.meany.org/directions/#Playhouse>) was a great venue for the six person play. The staging was great for the six-person group to spread out and use the whole room. Even so, they blocked well and I never lost sight of anyone in scene.

The play featured a strong emotional motif, of love lost and love found. Thought provoking and fun, the audience happily along for the ride as the actors moved quickly from scene to scene.

Café Variations is set interestingly, with only two actors playing static roles. The other four played two and sometimes three characters, and I could only tell who is who based on their interactions with the other actors. Ambitious as it was, they performed well and I

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did not have much trouble keeping up with their roles once the show was going.

The theme of the night was love and romance as a metaphor of the café culture, people moving in and out of the bistro, making fleeting connections with other patrons and wait staff.

The topic of love hit home and the actors delivered their lines to get me emotionally invested in the characters. Deborah Wallace as the quirky and romantic Tilly did especially well, I thought. I could not help but get swept up the passion of her rousing monologues and dialogues.

While the play may have tackled some heavy topics, its comedy cannot be understated. With sassy quips and witty scenarios abound, it helped keep things



(<http://www.modeisfashion.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Siti-Company-Cafe-Variations-1-credit-Michael-Brosilow.jpg>)

*This isn't a normal cafe. Photo Credit: Michael Brosilow*

from getting too dramatic and dark. One instance had two characters play a game of strip slapjack, which stopped only when they got down to their skivvies. One has to admire that dedication.

Stephen Duff Webber also takes the honor of having

delivered one of the most impressively tongue-twisting monologues of the evening. Having three roles as well, he along with the rest of the cast had great chemistry with each other.

As a play this succeeded in entertaining, and further as social commentary on society and romance it was thought provoking and insightful. Maybe not for the very young due to the more mature subject matter and dialogue, it is a great opportunity for quality entertainment for the rest of us.

There are three more (<http://www.meany.org/tickets/?prod=6461>) show times for Café Variations this weekend, one Friday the 15th and two more Saturday the 16th. It's a delightful experience that shouldn't be missed.

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