

“All I Really Want” is to See JAGGED LITTLE PILL Again
by Xan Blount

On Tuesday, Jan 20, 2024, I found myself in the audience of what I had previously believed to be a show all about Alanis Morissette. Sharing the title of her album, the musical JAGGED LITTLE PILL instead focuses on the harsh reality of many adult topics, using adult language, such as: a dysfunctional family, addiction, and sexual assault. Stop by the Kravis Center until Jan 25, 2024, to find yourself moved by a beautiful telling of a hard story.

JAGGED LITTLE PILL is a jukebox musical that both uses and is inspired by Alanis Morissette’s 1995 album, JAGGED LITTLE PILL. The show began to be workshopped all the way back in 2014, however, the first show did not take place until 2018. The musical focuses on the Healy family consisting of the mother, Mary Jane, the father, Steve, the son, Nick, and the daughter, Frankie. When the story starts, Mary Jane is at the beginning of the long road of addiction, abusing the medication she was prescribed after a car accident. Steve Healy is rarely home, absorbed by his office work, and both his marriage and relationship with his kids are beginning to fall apart. Nick has just been accepted to Harvard and clues the audience into the weight that has been placed on his shoulders. Frankie, a student activist, is discovering her sexuality with the assistance of her best friend Jo and is finding her next injustice to battle.

Julie Reiber was tasked with the difficult job of portraying an addict slowly spiraling out of control, and she should be commended for the phenomenal job she did tackling such a hard topic. From her physicality that revealed the anxiety and withdrawal symptoms she was undergoing, to the shifts in her vocal delivery as she became more reliant on the medication, Reiber believably showed the devastating struggle of an addict. Teralin Jones, who plays Frankie Healy, had a powerful voice, with a belt that sounded supported throughout the entire show. Jones was able to connect with every one of her scene partners and created a realistic and distinct chemistry with her partners, especially between Jo, played by Jade McLeod, and Phoenix, played by Rishi Golani.

Jade McLeod, captured the true teenage angst that so much of Morissette’s music focuses on, and the rage McLeod produced during “You Oughta Know” perfectly portrayed how the song makes so many people feel. Allison Sheppard should absolutely be proud of the story she was able to represent through her performance as Bella. As an audience member I cried with

Bella as she broke down and began to process what had truly happened to her at the party the night before. Sheppard's performance of "Predator" had the entire audience on the edge of their seats, both impressed by Sheppard's talent and shocked by the reality of Bella's circumstance. The story Sheppard was tasked with portraying is not an easy one, but she did it with such strength and power that the audience was left with the powerful message of believing victims when they speak their truth.

What made the music for JAGGED LITTLE PILL so special was not only that the music is already beloved, but that the orchestra was on stage for the entire show. Due to the location of the orchestra, the availability of stage for a large set was limited, however, this issue was resolved by using smaller but still effective sets, designed by Riccardo Hernández. The lighting, designed by Justin Townsend, also assisted in capturing the mood of the scenes, showing the anger from the sadness experienced in the hard situations dealt with throughout the show, such as the red lights that accompanied Jo's anger during "You Oughta Know". Costumes, designed by Emily Rebholz, are another essential part of a show, and she should be commended for finding modern costumes that helped further develop the characterization of each character. All of Mary Jane's clothes, especially her work out gear that matched the other mothers, emphasized the desire to fit in as a well-known mother. Director, Diane Paulus, did an outstanding job at diving into hard topics without making them a joke, designing moments for the audience to sit in silence and begin to process the stories being shared.

JAGGED LITTLE PILL is a powerful show with a powerful message, and if none of the subject material prohibits you from seeing the production, I think it is an important show to see. It is not always easy to see a show that deals with hard topics, however, this show does a beautiful job of working through the unfortunate realities of these issues.

More information on the show and how to buy tickets can be found on the Kravis Center website or at the following link, <https://www.kravis.org/>! Tickets can also be purchased by calling the box office at 561.832.7469.