

# REVIEWS

## *The Conjugal Test* by Michael Lazan, directed by David Gautschy

Part of The Midtown International Theatre Festival 2007

July 22 – August 3, 2007

**nytheatre.com**

**indietheater.org**



### **NYTheatre.com**

Review by Michael Criscuolo



Michael Lazan's new drama, *The Conjugal Test*, is getting a strong production at this year's Midtown International Theatre Festival. Under David Gautschy's solid direction, and **led by an all-around solid cast**, this story of an Upper West Side family torn asunder by deceit and doubt is sure to be one of the festival's highlights.

David, a 50-year-old insurance man, is approached in a bar by Bernice, a significantly younger African American woman. At first, David is skeptical about her attempted pickup, thinking that maybe he's being punk'd, so to speak. It turns out Bernice has, indeed, been hired by an anonymous client to test David's fidelity. When he returns home later,

David sets out to discover who tried to trap him: Debs, his longtime partner of almost 30 years; Baba, their morose 16-year-old Goth daughter; or Louis, David's father, who lives with them.

*The Conjugal Test's* inciting incident gives way to deeper thoughts as Lazan uses it to examine the strength (and practicality) of long-term romantic bonds, and humanity's desire for change and connection. David and Debs never formally married because of their mutual belief that "no one loves their spouse forever," so they opted not to put that pressure on their union. But, as David delves deeper into his investigation, he and Debs both wonder if their life together couldn't use a good shaking up.

Gautschy guides *The Conjugal Test* with a confident hand, letting the script's inherent themes emerge on their own without spelling them out for the audience. Greg Thornton and Jacqueline Sydney are convincing as David and Debs, respectively. One easily believes they've been a couple for most of their lives. **Shaun Bennet Wilson is alluring and sensual as Bernice.**

*The Conjugal Test* is a sincere and thought-provoking look at a family on the verge of deciding whether or not to stay with the comfort and safety of what they have or risk it all for something new (and potentially better). **This production is an all-around strong outing for a group of artists I look forward to seeing more from in the future.**

## Roberta on the Arts

### **Robertaonthearts.com**

Review by Dr. Roberta E. Zlokower

*(truncated due to repetitive information)* Jacqueline Sydney, as Baba's mother Debs, shifts from schedule-driven Blackberry fanatic to a woman about to be scorned, and hell hath no fury like (a woman scorned). **Shaun Bennet Wilson, as Bernice, the hired consort, is sultry, sexy, and savvy. She's a predator extraordinaire, hired for a cause. The cast could not have been better chosen.** David Gautschy directed this splendid production with expertise and seamless timing. *The Conjugal Test* should soon have a home in a theatre in town.