

'Making It' scores big at Waldron

Review by
Terence Hartnett

Lauren Robert has set a new standard for musical theater in the community. Her show *Making It*, which opened

to an almost sold-out Waldron auditorium, received a standing ovation, and the audience didn't stop clapping until Robert came out for a second bow. I might add that this happened on a night when at least three other significant theater events opened in Bloomington.

Frankly, I don't know how she pulled it off, considering the economic constraints for theater in this town. From the overture to the curtain call, from the CD to the poster, this is a very slick, very professional production. Robert would be crazy not to take it to New York or Chicago. In short, *Making It*, with its solid script and polished score, is brilliant. Now, she'll probably leave town and break all our hearts.

Making It is about the conflicts and intersections between work and life, which are rarely the same thing. Although the show is about actors trying to "make it," the script and songs move beyond this narrative framework to a more universal commentary about how we all "make it," how we all struggle to create meaning in our lives.

With an irresistible energy, the play explores ordinary strategies for "making it," strategies that necessarily involve relationships. Friends support each other in their striving. Friends "enable" one another in their mutual self-delusion. Friends, at times, are closer than lovers because of their shared struggle. "Making it" comes to mean more than getting the part at an audition, as the struggle shifts from the stage to an AIDS clinic for two long-time friends. Lauren Robert (Bobby) and Robert Weber (Phillip) create a resonant emotional authenticity in the friendship that anchors the story in the dramatic rather than the sentimental. Robert and Weber make a good team off-stage as well. Weber's direction, staging, and choreography are artful, using the Waldron space effectively and creatively.

Robert and Weber bring a very strong cast to this production. Mike Price is charming, charismatic, and very funny as the "bad" playwright, Dov Pearl. Breshaun-Birene Joyner is magnetic as the slinky Jaquita. Marsha Bradford gives a witty and sharp performance. Ann Burke is, as always, convincing and compelling. Jerry McIlvain, Cathy Spiaggia, and others are effective as well.

The problem with musicals — or, I should say, my problem with musicals — is that they are structurally unsound: A story is interrupted by songs and falls apart. There are two ways to attend to this inherent instability. One, if the songs are great, no one notices the disruption. From the sexy "Sexy Baby" to the very gospel "You Will Be Forever Changed," *Making It* has wonderful songs. Two, the songs must also tell the story and not simply be entertaining diversions. The story Robert is trying to tell could not be told without songs such as "I'm Trying" and "Hard Fall" — they're essential to the action and crucial to her vision of friendship, hope, endurance and struggle.

Robert has brought something important and refreshing to the Bloomington theater community. Now, I'm afraid, we'll want more.

The Waldron Theater Series presents *Making It* Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Advance tickets (\$8/\$6) are recommended. Place credit orders by phone at 334-3100, or stop by the Waldron business office.



Lauren Robert - Robert Weber
and
John Waldron Arts Center
Bloomington Area Arts Council
present



MAKING IT

written by
Lauren Robert

Friday, April 16th - Saturday, April 17th
Friday, April 23rd - Sunday, April 25th