

Romantic Attraction & Ideological Conflict: Lia Romeo's STILL at Lewiston's Public Theatre

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The Public Theatre in Lewiston's production of Lia Romeo's two-character drama, *STILL*, is a beautifully calibrated exploration of the complex dynamics of past love, present attraction, and diametrically opposing personal ideologies. The new production, directed by Mark Routhier, starring Janet Mitchko and Joe Gately, proves to be as timely as it is universal.



Joe Gately & Janet Mitchko in STILL
Members of Actors' Equity Association

Romeo's seventy-five minute script is tightly written, skillfully paced, delivering its revelations with sharp precision. The central characters, Helen and Mark, are former lovers who meet again years later in life after Mark's divorce and spend an evening rekindling their old flame before discovering how far apart they are in their world views. The divisions that plague Helen and Mark are those which confront our society today – views on abortion, same sex marriage, finding civil discourse between conservatives and liberals. Without ever mentioning the names of a single current political figure, *STILL* paints a searingly accurate portrait of the contemporary American political landscape, just as it delves into the effects of these beliefs on interpersonal relationships.

Mark Routhier directs with an eye to subtle realism. From the achingly still awkwardness of the first fifteen minutes to the erupting passion and exploding arguments of the couple, Routhier builds the tension of the drama, punctuated by small vulnerable moments of humor. Chad Lefebvre's striking modernistic décor with its expressionist painted panels and sharp angles transforms fluidly from hotel bar to upstairs suite. Michael Reidy's lighting adds atmospheric touches moving from the neon lights of the cocktail lounge and window cityscape to the hazy lights of the bedroom. Kevin Hutchins supplies the contemporary costumes, while Keith Mercik balances the sound effectively. Aaron A. Watson serves as the expert Stage Manager.

The chemistry between the pair of actors, Janet Mitchko as Helen and Joe Gately as Mark, is intense and credible. Mitchko is touchingly vulnerable yet strong-willed as Helen, the best-selling author, who finds herself torn between rekindled attraction to her old love and adherence to her own moral compass. Gately is sweetly maladroit as her former lover, now torn between his feelings for her and his own political ambitions. The pair make the most of the tender and abrasive moments, sparring with equal fervor, and both make the hopeful ambiguity of the ending credible.

STILL marks an important moment in the Public's repertoire selection. It is not one of the usual charming comedies the company has often programmed. Rather, it is an important new work which speaks eloquently to our times defining the issues that shape our world in deeply human terms.

Photo courtesy of The Public Theatre

STILL runs from January 30, - February 8, 2026 at The Public Theatre, 31 Maple Street, Lewiston, ME 207-782-3200. thepublictheatre.org