

THEATER REVIEW ● "Mt. Morgan" delves mischievously into duplicity

Bigamy is a bumpy ride

BY PAUL DUCHENE
The Tribune

If you only see one hospital comedy this year, make it "The Ride Down Mt. Morgan" by Profile Theatre Project.

Portland Center Stage is doing a lively version of William Finn's "A New Brain," but "Mt. Morgan" is Arthur Miller at his best, and Profile does him justice.

Haven't heard of the play? There's a reason for that. It premiered in London in 1991 with a crippling dramatic problem and didn't make it to Broadway until 1998. A Public Theater production starring Patrick Stewart eliminated the ghost of the hero's father, and "Mt. Morgan" played until last fall. This is the play's West Coast premiere.

When successful insurance broker Lyman Felt (Dan Kremer) is involved

in a serious car crash, his problems are just beginning. Two wives turn up at the hospital, and it's clear he's been leading a double life.

First wife Theodora (Kathleen Worley) is a high-strung blue blood he's been married to for 32 years. She's accompanied by teen-age daughter Bessie (Deirdre Atkinson). Then wife No. 2 arrives. Leah (Jacque Drew) is an energetic Jewish insurance executive who's been married to Lyman for nine years and has a son by him. She lives upstate, Theo lives in New York, and Lyman has been shuttling back and forth.

When they meet, the women's lives fall apart. Leah was convinced that Lyman divorced Theo before they were married. Guess what? He didn't.

Kremer's Lyman is a charismatic rogue, well-matched by Worley's elegant, articulate Theo and Drew's

earthy, feisty Leah.

Lyman is convinced that his actions gave two women a good life and plenty of money and that he loved them better for being able to shuttle back and forth. All they see is betrayal of trust. His daughter, in particular, is very bitter.

The witty dialogue crackles in the best Miller fashion, conversationally propelling the story. All three principals strike sparks off one another, and they're ably assisted by the sole straight man, David Heath as attorney Tom. Pianist Rodolfo Ortega nicely sets the mood for each scene.

The structure of the play is juggled well by director Jane Unger. In the present, Lyman's busted up in bed. If he's hallucinating, he's up and moving around, sometimes in flashback.

Lyman really can't see that he did anything wrong. As he tells Leah be-



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Bigamist insurance salesman Lyman Felt's duplicitous ways are revealed after an accident puts him in the hospital, and both his wives are contacted in "The Ride Down Mt. Morgan."

fore their marriage: "Feeling is chaos, but any decent thing I've ever done was out of feeling, and every lousy thing I'm ashamed of came from careful thinking."

All the interactions grapple with the conundrum of bigamy, an unsolvable problem from the start. Lyman summarizes it best in a conversation with Tom:

"Look, we're all the same. A man is a 14-room house; in the bedroom he's asleep with his intelligent wife; in his living room he's rolling around with

some bare-assed girl; in the library he's paying his taxes; in the garden he's raising tomatoes, and in the basement he's making a bomb to blow it all up."

"The Ride Down Mt. Morgan" continues through May 6 at Theater! Theatre 3430 S.E. Belmont St., Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m. \$12-\$20. 503-242-0080.

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