The Last Night at Ballyhoo by Alfred Uhry

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The Last Night of Ballyhoo and the World of Southern Jewish Society

The essay presents a critical analysis of “The Last Night of Ballyhoo.” This play was written by Alfred Uhry and was produced and performed by the Ball State University Theatre. The director of the play was Gilbert L. Bloom. He produced a comedic play that was truly entertaining and conveyed a significant message regarding the particular predicaments that we, as humans with diverse opinions and morals, must come across in our everyday lives.

The elements and the factors related to the production were employed in a wonderful way, resulting in the success of the play. The characters were perfect for the roles they played. This perfection of characters helped provide the audience with insight into the setting of the play and the temperament of the production. The other factors and aspects that made the production successful include the scenery and the costumes, along with the other technical properties. The scenery or the background of the play was fabulously vibrant and realistic. Every little inch of detail was contributing to the set’s beautification.

Ballyhoo, Courtship, and the Social Rituals of Jewish Atlanta

Ballyhoo was a succession of yearly Southern Jewish community activities that took place through the initial half of the era. Lone Jewish people would go there to have meetings with other entitled bachelors and bachelorettes and expectantly find someone to wed. It would continue for numerous days, capping in a big ball, at which everybody was always perfectly outfitted. These Ballyhoos were supported by the classy Jewish social clubs; few of them were somewhat fashionable, keeping out the other kinds of Jews. For example, reform-owned clubs wouldn’t permit traditional Jewish people. Talking about the characters, with Joe being more conventional than Sunny and her family, there’s distress, and everyone has to take an extensive, firm look at their principles (Uhry).

Embracing one’s heritage and being fearless of who you are is the main subject of the play, and this theme has been conveyed to the audience in a superb manner. “The Last Night of Ballyhoo” is based on comedy and possesses a gentle and playful humor. It contains light-hearted and amusing content

depicting the deep reality it aims to give. Uhry's decision to establish the drama in contradiction to the background of World War II convinces us that he's making a declaration regarding forbearance. Jews are detached from one another in Atlanta because of the country of derivation. This may appear as a selection, but they are being thrashed for having Jewish blood thousands of miles away. Boo's task to admit Joe Farkas, a fellow Jew, provides the spectators with a note regarding how Jews were seen in the South in that period. The phrase "The Other Kind" is used numerous times to clarify a dissimilar form of Jew who is taken to be inferior to the Freitag or Levy family. Moreover, bigoted comments were made regarding the housekeeper, Louisa (Uhry).

The character Sunny has the aptitude to cut through the mask of fanaticism and fall in love with "the other kind," which conveys a fresh meaning to the family and the viewers. As she and Joe undo the mesh that clings them away from each other, the family is forced to face the fact that they've been living their life in a restricted approach. On the other hand, the role of Peachy Weil so is put on base for being from "the finest family in the South" and turns out to be a weasel who Lala weds out of responsibility. The play "The Last Night at Ballyhoo" imitates, though honestly lightly, the manner in which people who practice identical biases generate their own set of class and communal divisions. Their longing to be accepted by society becomes a basis for them to distinguish themselves from others. Actually, groups who reach the United States first have frequently turned on those who come in the future. And among the Jewish people in the South, many folks made the decision not to pass on Yiddish or Hebrew to their offspring and to perceive the more widespread Christian rites. The Freitag family is among the best Jewish clubs in the city that will allow them in, and their Christmas tree looks exactly like that, even if it is jestingly mentioned as a Hannukah bush. And, at least originally, they look down on the other type, the Jews, who refuse to attempt to pass (Uhry).

Comedy, Assimilation, and the Double Life of the Characters

A double life is depicted in "The Last Night of Ballyhoo." Half is the comedy that takes place in the drawing-room, and the other half is the annotation of the integration and intra-ethnic biases of Southern Jewish people, but never a unified whole. Uhry, the author, enhances a heavy bout of communal censure. Joe is the other type of Jew, the type from Eastern Europe who is able to speak Hebrew and Yiddish and celebrates Shabbat. German-Jewish families like the Freitag-Levys don't relate to this type (Uhry).

Alfred Uhry researches the lives of Southern Jews, a civilization that he presented to the American theater-going community with his Pulitzer Prize-winning production, Driving Miss Daisy. The scenery and scheme of The Last Night of Ballyhoo advanced from the tales Uhry heard growing up in a southern Jewish family, also through his own familiarities and experiences. The author had an intense wish to explore Jewish distinctiveness, plus the prejudgment imposed on Jews by other Jews. Uhry united these two interests to produce the fortunate world of the Levy-Freitag families. They reside in a

big home on one of Atlanta's finest roads. They come from the best country club. Their kids may join significant private institutions. All these accessories and amenities of treasure, nevertheless, cannot alter the point that they are Jews who reside in an overpoweringly Christian civilization. The preconception that they become familiar with as a consequence of their faith does not discourage them from approving conventional southern culture or from imitating this discernment within their own nation; German-Jews like the Freitags and Levys look down on or consider inferior the other types of Jews who are the Eastern European Jews. While The Last Night of Ballyhoo skillfully explores and studies this anti-Semitism, Uhry also spreads his thoughtful message with shiny wit, comedic non sequiturs, and funny characters and descriptions. The Last Night of Ballyhoo was first produced at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996 and went to Broadway the next year. This play has the authority to reconcile deep lacerations through its comedic uprightness. Whatever someone's individuality, each one of us asks for respectful treatment and is permitted to be who we really are (Uhry).

The Freitag-Levys are mentioned with so much cordiality and fondness, it's as though the author was fond of them too much to depict them to any actual risk. He can't assist but present them with a positive conclusion. But, in doing so, the author over-simplifies the intricate matter of predisposition, challenging the play's value as a part of the communal observation. Notwithstanding these problems, many will certainly find "The Last Night of Ballyhoo" to be a pleasant and inspiring play for the holiday time of year. However, this production's allures cannot overwhelm the script's broadly reduced take on a topic that is worthy of in-depth and considerate examination (Uhry).

Works Cited

Uhry, Alfred. *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1997.