

***Love Song* review by Richard Burman from the Victorian Drama League**

The action of John Kolvenbach's poignant comedy *Love Song* moves continually backwards and forwards between two locations – the drab apartment devoid of all belongings and personality occupied by Beane and the comfortable home of his wealthy sister and brother-in law, Joan and Harry, with one extra location thrown in. Full marks must be given to the technical crews who worked this production as all setting and resetting of scenery, all setting and resetting of furniture, all changes to the lighting, all setting and resetting of props were continually carried out quickly, silently and efficiently. The crews had been well drilled and deserved the warm acknowledgement they received at the curtain call.

Joan and Harry, both successful business people have reached a point in their marriage where the flames of love have almost died out because of their busy lives and Beane, Joan's brother, is a reclusive introvert whom she feels could be mentally unstable. Beane returns one day to find an intruder, a burglar, in his apartment – Molly – with whom he suddenly falls madly in love. This love transforms him, and he becomes articulate. His changed enthusiasm for his love and life reignites the affection of Joan and Harry. The whimsical part of the play comes when we and Beane realize that Molly is only real for him, when he conjures her back into his life.

The four principal characters were played by Travis Handcock (Beane), Chenoah Eljan (Joan), Peter Bevin (Harry) and Tanya Rich (Molly).

Travis Handcock, playing the pivotal role of Beane, gave a standout performance, reflecting clearly the varying phases through which the character was moving and evolving. The blossoming of Beane's character when he finds love and its closing when he thinks that love is taken from him were well conveyed.

Chenoah Eljan matched Travis in skill in presenting the changes Joan passes through from dominating businesswoman who has little time for her husband and wacky brother to flirtatious wife and then to understanding, sympathetic sister.

Harry is also a role that moves through different phases. He starts as what seems to be more of a straight-man for the comedy of his scenes with Joan and Beane, then more of a sounding board for Joan to bounce off. He moves to an earlier acceptance of Beane's change, which then affects him as he becomes the flirtatious husband. Peter Bevin conveyed these facets of his character clearly.

Molly is a more difficult character to establish. She is loud and aggressive to start but is just as much in need of understanding and love as the others. Then there is the

question of whether she is real or not. Tanya Rich gave a well-developed performance in this role. Full marks should be given to the set designer who allowed her to walk through the wall.

The cast was completed by Dean Michael, playing the cameo role of Bill, a waiter. Dean also came to the foyer at interval, while the audience were enjoying their coffee and biscuit, and entertained them with chatter and song.

This was a very fine production directed by Travis Handcock, and one of which The Mount Players should be justly proud.

But I do have a couple of reservations. The first is that there were moments early in the play of a lack of enunciation. The men were very clear all the way through, but I found the women difficult to understand when they were speaking loudly and quickly in their early scenes. The projection of consonants is very important in this sort of dialogue for the audience to quickly understand the words. The second is the same, yet the opposite. Very soft lines also need clear enunciation and projection to reach the back of the auditorium. And this projection is not helped when they are spoken across the stage and not to the audience. Again, the men were clear here.

These reservations aside, this was a very enjoyable production.