

## GLENDALE NEWS PRESS

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# Theater Review: Acting underscored in play



Giselle Wolf and Max Roeg in the Victory Theatre Center production of "Molly." (Photo by Tim Sullens)

By Dink O'Neal

**Fortunately, excellent acting and first-rate production values help to shore up a rather slow-moving story as Burbank's Victory Theatre Center presents "Molly" by playwright Simon**

**Gray.**

**Gray's tale of a British woman whose selfish desires leads from adultery to murder suffers from a pedantic first half and a second act that feels rushed and somehow incomplete.**

**To their credit, Director Jeffery Passero and company manage as good a job as is possible given the script's inherent weaknesses.**

**Heading up the company in the title role is Giselle Wolf, whose expertise lies in her ability to make this character simultaneously endearing and maddening.**

**Molly's need for excitement and personal satisfaction leads to personal choices that damage everyone with whom she comes in contact.**

**Wolf demonstrates this child-like mentality without ever crossing over the line into caricature. Molly wants what she wants and will do whatever it takes to achieve it.**

**Her unsuspecting husband, Teddy, suffers from hearing impairment, a condition meant perhaps to underscore his complete ignorance of Molly's behavior.**

**Don Moss plays Teddy with a charming jocularly that dissolves sharply into frustration and anger when he sees his wife for what she truly is.**

**It's a 180-degree turn that Moss delivers with chilling acuity.**

**Their housekeeper, Eve, played by Anne Gee Byrd, has a special place in her heart for Teddy.**

**She nurses him through his infirmities, listening to his rambling conversational topics and protecting him from the truth as long as she can.**

**And, as her character realizes the horrors that Molly has wrought, Byrd's work is nothing short of flawless as we see her agonizing over a situation she is helpless to repair.**

**The odd man out in this tale is Oliver, a village teenager hired on by Molly as gardener and handyman. Max Roeg handles this multifaceted character with a beautifully understated performance, particularly in those scenes where the character's immaturity manifests itself.**

**Predicting where Molly's and Oliver's relationship is heading requires very little brainpower as Gray concludes his extremely long-winded first act.**

**Conversely, the second act rips along, seeming to skip steps that would support the story's logic and prevent what is an otherwise confusing conclusion.**

**That having been said, Passero's direction is effective and bolstered by a gorgeously appointed drawing room set credited to designer Elizabeth Hayden-Passero.**

**Rob Corn's sound design details the English countryside — crickets, feathered wildlife, even a rainstorm — while capturing the 1930s setting with recognizable musical selections of the era.**

**Costuming by Carole H. Beule is nicely supportive of the time period as well.**

**In the end, however, it's all a strangely diametric opposition — a nicely performed production of an otherwise not so interesting play.**