

Theater Review: Photograph 51

J Turetsky

Playing at The Fountain Theater in Hollywood on Fountain Ave. The theater is known for its twice monthly *Forever Flamenco* show, but its intimacy was ideal for the production of *Photograph 51*, a play about a woman scientist who possibly should have received a Nobel Prize along with Watson and Crick and Maurice Wilkins...but didn't.

This fascinating story follows closely the story of the discovery of the structure of DNA as told by James Watson in his famous book *The Double Helix*, but is focused, instead, on Rosalind Franklin during the period of time in the early fifties that she was sharing a lab with Maurice Wilkins at one university in England, while Watson and Crick were working at another.

The stage was used ingeniously for all the scenes. Some scenes were in the shared x-ray diffraction lab, others in spaces of conversation between Watson and Francis Crick. Yet the stage was basically unchanged for all scenes. While one scene was going on, the actors from the previous scene at another universi-

ty were silently standing on stage observing the current scene. Thus, the idea of there being an intense competition between different labs and different scientists was made obvious. Also, without having to change sets, the play was able to proceed quickly from one scene to the next, without a break.

Rosalind was well acted as a "persnickety" woman in an environment where her lab-mate Maurice Wilkins couldn't take her to lunch at his usual eating place because the lunch quarters were for men only.

Dr. Wilkins was portrayed as nerdy yet emotional man, concerned with his image as a scientist, with a hidden attraction to Rosalind, who was in return aloof and immersed in her work.

Wilkin's assistant was portrayed as effusive, helpful and excitable;

James Watson as impetuously curious, ambitiously after the Nobel Prize, just as one might feel him to be after reading *The Double Helix*.

See the play and discover what the obscure Photograph 51 was about.

The play has been extended into June.

Producers/Directors: Deborah Lawlor, Stephen Sachs, Simon Levy

Writer: Anna Ziegler

Starring: Aria Alpert, Daniel Billet, Joe Delafield, Ian Gould, Kerby Joe Grubb, Ross Hellwig, Graham Norris.