

MONSTERS! - the musical

by: Pamela Enders, Ph.D.

For many years, in my work as a psychologist, I have heard patients refer to their "monsters" - those internal psychical creatures whose voices proclaim its owner's inadequacies and fears. Gail Phaneuf and Ernie Lijoi have managed to create a musical which bring those monsters to life in a hilarious and sometimes poignant tour de force.

The story line is this: Samantha (beautifully portrayed by Lisa Beausoleil) is turning 40 and as if she doesn't have enough to deal with her nosy, intrusive mother (top notch job by Cheryl McMahan) reminding her what a failure she is, soon her monsters come to life to add to her angst. If I had been asked as a psychologist to think of three monster types that typically haunt a person, I would have chosen the three in this musical. The first - Apathy - hilariously portrayed by Patti Hathaway - represents that part of us that says: "Aw, don't bother..what's the use...it won't work out anyway...have a cookie...watch TV" (instead of doing something constructive with your life). The second monster, Fear, is wonderfully played by Michelle Dowd. Fear is that part of us that keep us from taking chances, that fills us with all sorts of neurotic apprehensions and phobias. The last Monster - Body - is terrifically played by our own Wayne Fritsche! Popping out of the closet like a very tall, slim, haughty Liberace, Wayne/Body steals the show with his Queer-eye-for-the-straight-guy attitude. I couldn't take my eyes off him as he slithered and or pranced around the stage, telling poor Sam how hopeless she was (too fat, too drab, no waist, awful clothes, no style, a hair on her chin, crows feet around the eyes...all those things we are likely to mumble to ourselves when we have the courage to look at ourselves in the mirror in the morning). I won't spoil the plot by telling you what happens after the three Monsters harass poor Sam except to say that Molly Anne Kelleher also does a fine job.

The dialogue is snappy and funny and the music and lyrics are perfect for carrying the story line forward. Having had the pleasure of working with Ernie Lijoi (and Will Mc Millan) in a show at the CCAE years ago, I know that Ernie has been working on this theme for a long time! His wit, his intelligence and his musicality shine through all of the songs. He has clearly found a perfect collaborator in Gail Phaneuf.

Go see Monsters!!! You will recognize yourself and have a good laugh (several!) in the process.

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