

Follow Me Down

By Patrick Barrett; Directed by Sarah Elizabeth Wansley

Off-Off-Broadway, Play
Runs through 11.1.10
The Flea, 41 White Street

by [Joseph Samuel Wright](#) on 10.24.10



A scene from Follow Me Down at The Flea.

BOTTOM LINE: *Follow Me Down* is a coming of age story set in England both physically and in speech and style. In an Oxford dorm, the literati gather around their poetry, raillery, and angst.

Follow Me Down feels very much like an English play: sedate, polite, witty, until halfway through the second act when it becomes very "American Fringe," with wild outbursts and sensational plot twist.

Set specifically at Oxford University in 1925, the scenography succeeds brilliantly in manufacturing this environment. Both sets (by Emily Inglis) and costumes (by Whitney Adams) casually represent the style and period. There is no attempt to replicate a perfectly authenticity. The clothes, props, and furniture look and feel like an approximation of 1925 England; the audience has no need to scrutinize, because all is approximate, and so one can accept the reality and slip into another time. This collaboration of hair, fabrics, and hardback books is a testament to taste, consistency, and hard work, which results in an effortless, unassuming stage.

Folded into the world of this dusky dorm, the script is verbose but peppered with witty exchanges, poetic speeches, and well-mannered quips. Each neat scene provides a new chance

for the actors to amuse with impassioned declarations or bon mots delivered in crisp, clear speech. In fact, the speech is the true star of this show, not only in the words but in the well-trained voices that speak them with flawless accents. This show is a testament to the benefits of vocal training and to what can only be the phenomenal abilities of dialect coach Jill Muller.

Truly in voice and body, this is a cast of trained actors, a refreshing find in an off-off-Broadway house. Jessica Frey, Lydia Blaisdell, and especially Akilah Williams remind us what a great performer can do with a minor role. In the role of Simon, Jason Resnikoff's seamless physicalization and matching vocals create vibrancy in a quiet character. But hardest working of all is Graham Halstead. This show rests on Halstead's performance as James, the cad with a conscience, and the natural charm he infuses. The audience must love James in spite of his bad behavior, and with Halstead in the role, this rogue becomes irresistible. With all of these accomplished actors, it is no wonder that the performances come into full stride when they are all working as an ensemble in the group scenes.

This production is still new, though, and when I attended early in the run, both the performers and the technicians stumbled at times. Similarly, the otherwise sturdy script gets a bit "kitchen sink" in the second act, throwing in every obvious path that young angst can take. I recommend seeing the show later in the run, when the rich potential of this show has a full chance to manifest.

Follow Me Down's combination of scenographic achievement and solid performances make it a diamond of the 50-seat house set, and at only \$17 it is one of the few well-priced shows of its level. Definitely worth the money if you like witty dialogue, British humor, or strapping young boys struggling to become men.

(*Follow Me Down* plays the downstairs theatre at The Flea, 41 White Street, through November 1, 2010. Remaining performances are: Monday, October 25th at 7PM, Friday, October 29th at 9PM, Saturday, October 30th at 9PM, Sunday, October 31st at 7PM, and Monday, November 1st at 7PM. Tickets are \$17 and can be obtained by calling 212.352.3101 or by visiting theflea.org.)

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