

'night, Mother

'*night, Mother* is a play about suicide, and painless it most certainly is not. Perhaps you were thinking that taking in a little theatre might give you a much-needed lift as this sombre winter draws to an ungracious and dilatory close. This is not the play for you.

Marsha Norman's Pulitzer prize-winning work (1983) is a powerful, intense perspective on a very uncomfortable subject. The mood is set quickly as Jessie announces her intention to shuffle off her mortal coil, coolly specific and terse about the how and the when, becoming more expansive about the why as her anguished and uncomprehending mother attempts to reach her. This aspect exposes suicide for the cruel, sadistic and aggressive act it is.

Alexandra Valassis plays Jessie, and her despair is palpable as she portrays a person who has come to terms with her inability to find in the minutiae of her day-to-day existence that joy which is crucial to all life. Sandy Ferguson is her bewildered Mama, and together they replay in reminiscence their unremarkable lives. The audience grasps gratefully at the occasional touches of black humour, but all in all the work did what it was probably intended to do, to afford a multi-faceted glimpse into the scary world of suicide and its horrifying aftermath.

Directed by Jesse Corbeil, a veteran of Montreal theatre, '*night, Mother* is a presentation of Altera Vitae and with each new production, Altera Vitae will partner itself with a charitable organization. For '*night, Mother* a portion of the proceeds go, appropriately enough, to FSOS (Family Survivors of Suicide).

The Mainline Theatre (below Duluth, Metro Mont Royal) at 3997 St. Laurent Blvd. in Montreal is a fun, funky venue. The less than imposing entrance stairway leads to a delightful, unabashedly eclectic foyer, furnished with cast-off and rummage sale items, abuzz on Wednesday's opening night with all the usual suspects from the Montreal Fringe theatre scene. Unpretentious though it is, the theatre space itself is excellent, with possibly the most comfortable seating in the city. The play runs about an hour and a half with no intermission.

Night Mother is playing March 19 to 30, 2008

Wednesday to Sunday: 7:55 pm, Doors open at 7:15 pm, Showtime: 7:55 pm

Saturday & Sunday Matinee: 1:55 pm, Doors open at 1:15 pm, Showtime: 1:55 pm

Tuesday, March 25, 2008 is "Charity Nite"

10\$ of every ticket sold donated to FSOS (www.suicideaftermath.com)

Mary Moore, March 22 2008