

THEATRE REVIEW: An Emotional "The Last Five Years" at Temple

January 14, 2020 | Ivana Vazquez, reviews, theatre



Cameron Wade (left) and Ashley Robinson (right). Photo courtesy Temple Theatre.

★★★1/2 by Ivana Vazquez, contributor

The Last Five Years

Temple Theatre

SANFORD, NC

January 9 - 19, 2020

Rating: 3.5 out of 5 stars

Learn more about this production [HERE](#).

This past weekend I had the pleasure of going for a lovely ride out to beautiful downtown Sanford for *The Last Five Years*, a tragic musical directed by Jeremy Skidmore, that begins at the end of a five-year marriage, and walks us through where it all went wrong--as well as what went so wonderfully right to begin with.



Cameron Wade (front) and Ashley Robinson (back). Photo courtesy Temple Theatre.

As the audience filled the classically decorated theatre, we were greeted by a giant clock with ticking hands that seemed initially to indicate our anticipation of the performance, but evidently had much more significance later on in the play as a symbol of fleeting time (“Moving Too Fast” and “The Next Ten Minutes”). The clock fades into the image of an old brick wall with two windows shining a dark blue light, as a piano begins to play in the background. Actress Cameron Wade enters the scene for her Temple Theatre onstage debut as Catherine Hiatt, wearing a sweater, jeans, and sad red eyes that quickly began to well up with tears.

At this point my favorite song of the entire play begins, “Still Hurting,” sung by such a heartbreakingly sweet voice. This song is our first insight into the plot, as Catherine sings about what it feels like to be the person left behind when someone gives up on a marriage. As far as hooks go, “Still Hurting” had me completely sucked in, and incredibly eager to see where writer and composer Jason Robert Brown could go from here.

The background changes often to indicate which time period we’ve skipped to, but is harder and harder to pinpoint as the play progresses. We start with “one week earlier” when Jamie Wellerstein, played by Ashley Robinson, enters the scene. Catherine strokes his hair and begs him to stay, choking up at the thought of him leaving, then suddenly we jump to five

years earlier when Catherine and Jamie first started dating. The time-leaps in this play seem rather sporadic at first, but then it becomes clear that the time jumps aren't for the audience to understand anything. This entire piece is Catherine and Jamie looking back through their relationship, remembering the good times and noticing the signs that could have prevented the decay of their love, if only they had seen it sooner.

While there are funnier and more lighthearted moments, such as "Shiksa Goddess" (Jamie's almost-touching song to Catherine about her being everything his Hebrew family would *not* want for him), and the inspiring songs from Catherine to herself, "I'm a Part of That" and "I Can Do Better Than That," the play takes a turn in the second act with songs like "If I Didn't Believe in You" and "Nobody Needs to Know" that made me simultaneously tear up and want to yell at the characters.



Cameron Wade (left) and Ashley Robinson (right). Photo courtesy Temple Theatre.

What really put me over the edge, though, was the final duet, "Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could Never Rescue You," the perfect parallel between Catherine's loving sentiments after their first date--and saying goodbye until tomorrow--and Jamie's final decision to say goodbye to Catherine forever. The continuous light and color changes of the set throughout the play helped the audience keep clear which time and emotion we were in, but as this last song came to a close, the scene was split between warm and cold colors, with Catherine and Jamie in opposite places in both time and emotion. This reverse chronological musical is one of the best performances I've seen, from the truly impressive vocals of the two-person cast, to the painfully real content. It's been a long time since a play left me so emotionally distraught that I needed to hear old Taylor Swift breakup songs on the drive home, so I'd have to conclude that this performance was a wild success for all involved!

Ivana Vazquez (she/her), arts contributor, is a Boston-born Durham resident and wouldn't live anywhere else! A poet since age fifteen, Ivana completed her poetry residency in central Vermont, where she finished her first book. For the past three years she has been a blogger-for-hire, working primarily with nonprofit organizations in the Triangle. When Ivana isn't writing, she's managing her art promotion company: Ghost Flowers, which was founded to support and raise awareness for art therapy. If you can't catch Ivana at any of the countless art events throughout the Triangle, you can find her on Instagram [@ivanasadventures](#)