

British Theatre Guide

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Shiver

Daniel Kanaber

Watford Palace Theatre

3–22 February 2014

Shiver is set in the period of Shivah, the Jewish time of mourning which lasts seven (shivah) days after the funeral of the deceased.

This Shivah for Sadie Tinnaver is truncated, for she died only yesterday and tonight marks the beginning of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It would be inappropriate to continue Shivah into a holy day, especially one of such importance, so widower Mordecai is doubly eager to get everything right for he believes his Sadie wanted everything done in a traditional Orthodox Jewish way, even though he at one time went to a Reform Synagogue.

He and the Rabbi are just back from the funeral when the play begins. It seems to have gone off properly, despite Mordecai's nervousness and the fact that Joshua Avod is only a student Rabbi.

Young Joshua does look the real thing, complete with beard and side-locks but he is nervous too, to get it right. Mordecai is wearing leather shoes and his humming could count as singing, which isn't allowed. Then there's Mordecai and Sadie's son who isn't there, and the need for a minyen (a group of ten men) to conduct a religious ceremony.

Meanwhile, across the street, there is another funeral going on. When son Ben, an atheist living with a non-Jewish girl, does turn up, having missed the funeral, he keeps doing the wrong thing too.

This is a gentle comedy that touchingly deals with love, bereavement, grief and religious attitudes. Derek Bond's direction keeps a delicate balance between humour and compassion and draws excellent performances from his cast.

Ilan Goodman's Joshua Avod, concerned that things go smoothly the way his rabbinical seniors expect, is nervously trying to guide Mordecai through his grief and accommodate his transgressions against kosher rules, is a picture of nervous edginess.

As Mordecai, David Horovitch is as large as life and just a little more in his north London Jewishness. His insecurity and his loss are poignantly played and the pain with which he misses Sadie matched by a hint that there might be something he feels guilt about, his mistakes the funnier because he too is trying so hard to do things right..

Son Ben clearly has certain issues with his dad but Ben Caplan plays him as likeable and loving, his inappropriate behaviour due just to lack of thought, not contrariness. There is affection here as well as the friction that often occurs between the generations.

Here are three actors working in harmony, three performances that capture the Jewish situation but embrace a much wider relevance in their presentation of feelings and behaviour at a time of loss,

and are touchingly funny at times because they are so true to life.

Reviewer: [Howard Loxton](#)