

Gymnopédies

Written and Directed by Martin Paul Roche

Synopsis

Los Angeles and an empty stage in a 'dark' theatre. An unexpected invitation to attend a read through for a play reunites three actresses for the first time in thirty years; thirty years since they rehearsed together, what was a 'new' play, *Gymnopédies*. Thirty years of three very different lives which now converge for one brief day. One day to reacquaint, to rehearse, to reconcile, to remember. But what else might happen when you are forced to remember, not just the make-believe of theatre, but also the reality of the past? The past is a big place when you need a somewhere to hide. But not when you're trying to hide from yourself.

Cast: Three middle-aged actresses: Joan Dupre, Diane Sangster and Katherine Lamar
Accents: American
Period: Present day, with the action spanning one day (mid-morning until late afternoon)

Joan: Cool, sophisticated, smart, elegant, composed, controlled and controlling; well-dressed, she speaks 'money'. She is sharp, cutting, aloof, the Queen of put-downs. Successful in her career, hungry for success at all costs. She is difficult to know, understand, devoid of true friends, relationships, love, existing behind a façade. Although she is suspicious of intentions, blinkered, in resolution she is vulnerable, damaged, complex, craving of warmth, of friendship, of hope. You could imagine that her back story is of one of a person who would wish to be, at times, a million miles away from this world and the profession. But in resolution, she has a genuine assuredness and composure, determination, confidence, sincerity and pride; she is finally at home in her skin.

Diane: She never made it as an actress or as anything. She exists. Tired, angry, downbeat in presentation. Suspicious, questioning. She is bitter about the life she feels she could have had, the money and material value she feels should have been hers. Joan is her nemesis. Her sarcasm rises to match her, but never trumps that of Joan, with whom there is no love lost. She is a little unkempt, unfashionable, dated, not 'showbiz'. Joan smokes out of style. Diane smokes out of desperation and necessity. A heavy drinker which flavours her character, neediness, habits, mannerisms, but not a drunk. Nervy but not nervous. She has an existence but wants a life. Her history has made her bitter, dismissive, cold. A loner in a self-made world of black and white.

Katherine: Genuine, sincere, warm, haphazard and initially, the nearest to whatever 'normal' might be perceived to be. She is 'mumsy' in appearance, like she has just dropped her brood off at school and is on route to a coffee morning with the other moms. She lives in a bubble of family, faith, abstracted somewhat from the real world of city life and its complexities; she is content, yet not. She lives her life through her family and their lives, their successes and aspirations. She wants something she has never had but does not know what that is. Her poor health has been a wake-up call, albeit an unacknowledged one, to discover something of herself which is for her and not for the satisfaction of others. We also see a side of her which she did not know existed, but which is darker, unexpected, shocking – even to her.

The play represents one day, a brief window through which we see the three women revealed, warts and all. Their journey is not finalised by the end; the end of their day back together is, in effect, a new beginning for all of them. And reconnecting with each other affords them an opportunity to embrace their dreams and the lives which they realise are still within their reach. To finally put to bed their respective demons and rediscover hope, contentment, self-worth, fulfilment, friendship, and vitality, themselves.



This play is entirely a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.