

Brothers' struggle of love

Rain Man

By Dan Gordon, adapted from the motion picture. Screenplay by Barry Morrow and Ronald Bass, directed by Sandra Bates. Ensemble Theatre. The Playhouse, Canberra Theatre Centre. Until Saturday.
Reviewer: Peter Wilkins

Whether you are familiar with the movie or, like me, have only ever caught promotional snippets, Sandra Bates's production of Dan Morgan's stage adaptation of *Rain Man* makes for a stunning highlight of the Canberra Theatre Centre's 2010 Subscription Series.

The Ensemble Theatre production is compelling theatre, superbly played by an excellent cast, headed by Alex Dimitriadis as the high-wired, hustling businessman, Charlie Rabbitt Jr and Daniel Mitchell as the heart-warming, lovable, unpredictable autistic savant, Raymond Babbitt. Morgan's script is taut and engrossing, from the opening

scene of Charlie's profit-driven and octane-charged aggression to the endearing, ironic and warmly comical depiction of the "developmentally disabled" Raymond, and throughout the play's profoundly humane exploration of the evolving relationship and love between the brothers.

At times the script brushes with tension, as Charlie struggles to reconcile his financial problems with his changing feelings for the brother he never knew he had and the \$7 million inheritance that has gone to Raymond.

But *Rain Man* is about more than a struggle to claim a rightful inheritance. Charlie's pilgrim's progress is a journey of epiphany, illuminated along the way by the innocence of Raymond's sincere and true nature.

At the end, Charlie's acceptance of his emotional redemption allows him to admit his love for Raymond and for his girlfriend, Susan, played with appealing natural conviction by Catherine McGriffin. Charlie's stint at the

casino when he uses Raymond's amazing memory to cheat the system may not change his hustling ways, but as the lights fade on the closing tableau of Raymond and Charlie together, the audience is left with the transformative power of love.

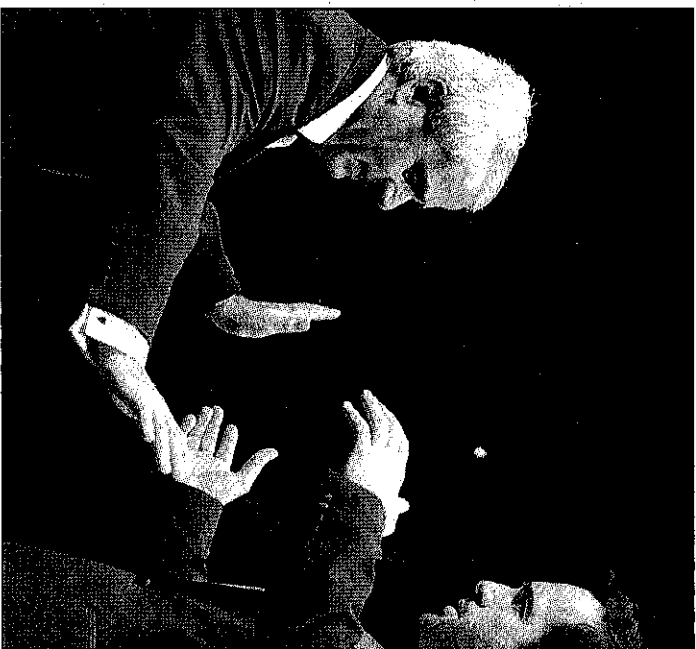
Ensemble Theatre's production of *Rain Man* is not to be missed.

An outstanding ensemble of actors under Bates's insightful direction imbue Morgan's script with powerful drama, lively humour and poignant tenderness. Dimitriadis and Mitchell work superbly off each other.

It is worth the price of a ticket to see Mitchell's extraordinarily observed and sensitively portrayed performance of the autistic Raymond.

Every gesture, every nuance, every vocal inflection inhabits the heart and mind of the character - willful, anxious, self-absorbed, entirely honest and without pretension.

It is a must-see performance and production.



Daniel Mitchell and Alex Dimitriadis in *Rain Man*. Photo: LANNONI