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Theater review

Botanic Garden

Canamac Productions and David Fettner at [Victory Gardens Greenhouse Theater](#). By Todd Logan. Dir. Olympia Dukakis. With Carmen Roman, James Leaming.

After 30 years of marriage, Kate's a 54-year-old widow. She's just accepted her first date since Jake's death two years ago (an invitation for a walk through the botanic garden), and she's terrified. She only said yes, she insists, because she was "caught off guard." Luckily she has her husband to talk her into moving on.

It's near impossible to avoid comparing Logan's work to two others recently seen on our stages that tackle similar themes. But unlike the treacly magical realism of Noah Haidle's *Vigils* or the pandering, NPR-lite self-analysis of an upper-middle-class liberal marriage faced with terminal illness in Steven Dietz's *Fiction* (staged in this very space), Logan's play displays a remarkable emotional honesty. The version of Jake whom Kate interacts with here is clearly a creation of her own mind; as he forces her to revisit the highs and lows of their relationship, we can see that he is her agent of change, allowing her to reprocess the years they spent together and her own sense of loss so she can continue with her life and her still-living need for intimacy.

Dukakis's empathetic direction and the easy rapport between Roman and Leaming leaven the truthful difficulties of leaving a loved one behind and going on about the business of life. By acknowledging the hard work of their long marriage, Kate's manifestation of Jake allays her fears, tenderly allowing her to move ahead.

— *Kris Vire*