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Power of Innocence

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Laurie Winer (review date 12 April 1989)


[In the following review, Winer compares Zindel’s depiction of Chris Boyd in Amulet Against the Dragon Forces to J. D. Salinger’s portrait of Holden Caulfield in The Catcher in the Rye.]
The staging by B. Rodney Marriott was as appropriately heavy-handed as the writing, but the acting proved generally excellent. What good actors we have nowadays!

As Chris, McGrath, who may be remembered from his appearance in the Circle Rep’s last play, Dalton’s Back, is altogether admirable, weak, reed-like, pathetic, yet with a kind of tenacity that lets one believe in his survival.

Spencer, as the coarse Floyd, is also excellent, horrifically convincing as an aging bully-boy with faint intimations of a now lost gentler, kinder self.

Hedwell has a brusque Ortonesque authority as the nurse/mother, while Dean, in the one truly sympathetic role in the play as the good-natured hustler who befriends Chris, reveals a sweetness that even survives the play’s intentionally pervasive nastiness.

**Amulets Against the Dragon Forces** has the air of a work written to enable its author to get something off his chest and perhaps clear the decks for a different future. One hopes so.

Laurie Winer (review date 12 April 1989)


[In the following review, Winer compares Zindel’s depiction of Chris Boyd in Amulets Against the Dragon Forces to J. D. Salinger’s portrait of Holden Caulfield in The Catcher in the Rye.]

Like J.D. Salinger, Paul Zindel cannot forget the turbulent years of adolescence. The author of a series of popular novels for young adults, Mr. Zindel writes vividly of teenagers who overcome loneliness by finding friendship, love and adventure. For the young characters who inhabit the darker worlds of Mr. Zindel’s drama, however, salvation is often a much trickier proposition.

Staged with assurance by director E. Rodney Marriott, Amulets is superbly acted by two Circle Rep regulars, Mr. McGrath and Mr. Spencer. They make fascinating adversaries. Mr. Spencer’s flat delivery and threateningly sexual gait spell the lie of his character’s disarming shows of engagement. He judiciously uses subtext and deadpan humor...
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