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By Franci Hart,  
OKCFriday

“Pressure Makes Diamonds”

Denise Lee

Cowritten by Monique Midgette and Denise Lee

Directed by Monique Midgette

Musical Director Norman Williams

Energetic! Jubilant! Fun! Denise Lee’s one-woman-show, “Pressure Makes Diamonds” brought live theater back to OKC with a flourish. “Pressure Makes Diamonds,” a show created just for Lyric, is a combination narrative, poetry and song that synthesizes Ms Lee’s life as she turns sixty, the year of the diamond.

Set at the Myriad Gardens Water Stage, among the beautiful spring flowers and where the rising moon was visible, “Pressure Makes Diamonds” is a credit to Lyric’s commitment to quality theater even under pandemic conditions. The audience was screened before admission and seated socially distanced during the show. Safety was never an issue. More importantly, “Pressure Makes Diamonds” was superb!

Lee’s story is full of comic self-revelation and some poignant reminders of the racial prejudice a woman of color can face. The venue, Myriad Gardens Water Stage, provided an intimacy that Lee’s charisma played upon. She encouraged an audience member she saw mouthing the words to a song she was singing and ignored a heckler who was standing outside the stage area with grace and charm.

The production would have been more than enough with just her singing. This lady sells everything she sings with a joy and energy that flows through the audience. The range of the music was impressive. Everything from “Bridge Over Troubled Waters,” to “I ain’t Gonna Let you Break My Heart Again” to “His Eye is on the Sparrow” was musically superior.

Ms Lee was ably accompanied by Norman Williams on keyboard, Lawrence “Peebody” Ferrell Jr., on drums, Brady Mosher on guitar and Clinton Trench on bass.

The joy of “Pressure Makes Diamonds” cannot be overstated. This production plays at the Myriad Gardens through April 3. It is a wonderful way to spend a spring evening.