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Living *In My Body* With All It Entails

I usually look forward to my theater evenings, but the night after the election, not so much. Yet, if in that moment, I attended *In My Body* out of a sense of duty, I was glad I did. Anatomically improbable as it sounds, this uplifting, inclusive little show has its heart in the right place, and also wears it on its sleeve. Anyway, it's touching, and helped lift my funk.

In My Body is an ensemble revue, wherein five singer-actors explore the personal and collective relationship we all have with our closest life partner – our physical beings. We love our bodies, and we hate them; they support us and betray us; we're judged (often unfairly) by them. But they are ours, and we need to find a way to accept them. In the show, this happens through song, monologues, and some poetic riffs.

Yes, the topic is as vast as it sounds, and I find some parts of *In My Body* (seen here at the Prince in its world premiere production) better than others. The songs by composer Dan Martin and lyricist William Biello are generally melodic and winning, whether comedic (an ode to porn star turned feminist icon Annie Sprinkle), introspective ("Goodbye, Body," a sweet William Finn-esque ballad about the end of life), or rabble-raising (the gospel-like title number). They are well-served by the talented performers – April Woodall, Katie Zaffrann, and Donnie Hammond respectively feature in the ones I mentioned; the other actors, also good, are Michael Indeglio and Austin Ku. Director Kathryn MacMillan and choreographer K. O. DelMarcelle provide a fluid, well-paced evening, and there's a terrific three-person band.

Mostly, the songs focus pretty centrally on body image and acceptance, but elsewhere the show ventures out, not always convincingly. A long piece on fertility has some clever rhymes, but feels like a digression (it's as much about social pressure and the limits of insurance as about the body). I'm still not sure what to make of an odd, two-person sequence called "Holly & Hubby," which is almost a micro-opera. (In fact, I'd like to see Martin and Biello rework this as a stand-alone one-act.) The confessional monologues are heartfelt, but there's a sense of overshare, and they don't always bring out the actors' best work. Appealing as the ensemble members are, I'm not sure their own physicality doesn't slightly undercut the show's message – all five are able-bodied and exceptionally attractive.

Still, *In My Body* is entertaining – until suddenly, it's more than that. Near the end, there's a spoken section, "My Body Belongs to Me," where the tone is darker and angrier than what's come before. One by one, the cast defiantly claim their rights – to be safe from rape, bullying, objectification and abuse. The night I saw the show, some of the performers were in tears; members of the audience were, too. The interlude was followed by a few seconds of silence – then, cheers.

It's not the end of the show – and there's some good material that follows – but it should be. On November 9, 2016, at least, nothing could top that moment.