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'Mirror' a Haunting Reflection of Loneliness

Stefan Marks' work follows the arc of male bonding in a challenging, always emotional way.

Theater Review

By F. KATHLEEN FOLEY
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Just when the phenomenon of male bonding has reached a zenith of trendiness, writer-director Stefan Marks elects to examine the very funny, very painful problem of male disassociation in his deft drama "The Mirror" at Two Roads Theater.

Marks' 1999 play "Baseball" at the Stella Adler ventured into the same emotional territory, with a few dramaturgical stumbles. "The Mirror" is more challenging, less linear, a purer expression of the dilemma arising from the modern male's failure to communicate.

A sort of Shakespearean Stages of Man with a postmodern twist, the play concerns the imperfect interactions among four men—or perhaps the same man—who range in age from youth to AARP-eligible.

Marks' simple staging features Mark Svastics' fine lighting and a uniformly superlative cast, including Marks himself. Spring (Byrne Offutt) is an eager romantic neophyte with a comical crush on actress Neve Campbell; Summer (Marks) is a serial philanderer who

rationalizes his deception through sociobiological sophistry; Fall (Bruce B. Mathews) is a disappointed complainer who sustains a sudden and devastating loss; while Winter (Steve Eastin) is a stoical survivor who has lived in solitude for so long, he has given up the habit of hoping.

The play consists primarily of piquant monologues in which the men muse variously about their lives and lots. When the characters do interact, they do so haltingly, with the pained and creaky effort of invalids whose muscles have atrophied through disuse.

Marks has a fine sense of the ridiculous, and the flawed exchanges between his quintessentially lonely guys are sometimes achingly funny—more often just aching. Set adrift in their own unconsciously self-imposed isolation, these men are so palpably sad they haunt us long after the curtain call.

BE THERE

"The Mirror," Two Roads Theater, 4348 Tujunga Ave, Studio City. Fridays-Saturdays, 8 p.m. Ends Nov. 11. \$12. (888) 525-0776. Running time: 1 hour, 15 minutes.