

# Review of Marjorie Prime at the Headgate Theatre, Colchester

*By Paul T Davies*

Welcome to the near future, where our reliance on technology has advanced even further.

Marjorie lives with her daughter and son in law, and her husband Walter. Except this Walter looks substantially younger than her, has memories of their life together, but needs stories of their significant moments.

That's because Walter is a 'Prime', a robot that has been designed to provide company and comfort.

Marjorie's daughter, Tess, is uncomfortable about this use of AI, but her son in law, Jon, is an advocate, clearly seeing the benefits that it has brought to Marjorie.

In the second part of the play, Marjorie has died, and is now a Prime, interacting with Tess, and in the third, Tess has died suddenly and Jon talks to her Prime.

It all raises questions about how far we should go with AI, and Jordan Harrison's clever, intelligent script, raises ethical dilemmas surrounding issues with technology.

When the third "prime seat" was brought onstage for Tess, there was a danger that the script could get a bit silly, but this danger was swiftly avoided by a talented cast and a text that took on board the dilemma's faced by the characters.

As Marjorie, Sara Green gave another superlative performance, clearly drawing an effective line between human and android, and this was also reflected very strongly by Suzanne Bailey as Tess, and Adam Duarte-Dias was level and convincing as Prime Walter. Representing humanity, Joseph Sales did a good job conveying the complexity of the dilemma and his own heartbreak at being left alone- androids only bring limited comfort.

The direction by Malcolm Kimmance was confident, clear and well paced, and the set by Stephen Peeling and the team was, as usual, superb and perfect.

The play itself foregrounds the debate over characters who are, in the main, two dimensional, and I felt the production had an unnecessary interval. But the final scene, in which the primes converse, edit and rewrite memory and repeat until it becomes fact, is powerful and haunting, and this was a very fine production from **Headgate Theatre** Productions.

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