

## Review: *Let It Be Me* | Theatre Britain | Cox Building Playhouse

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Next performance on Fri, Apr 14 at 8pm

### Taking Care

Theatre Britain offers a poignant story of Alzheimer's and caretakers in Carey Jane Hardy's *Let It Be Me*.

by [Janice L. Franklin](#)  
published Tuesday, April 11, 2017



Photo: Michael C Foster

**Plano** — Carey Jane Hardy's play *Let It Be Me* tells the story of a crisis point for a caretaker living with and through a loved one's Alzheimer's. For its area premiere at **Theatre Britain**, Sue Birch has directed it with elegance and care.

The action unfolds on a set by Anthonka Ferdinand that is smart, efficient and appealing.

Amy (Octavia Y Thomas) lives with and cares for her Aunt Sylvia (Ivy Opdyke) who is losing her memories more rapidly. Amy's cousin Colin (Christian R. Black) loves Aunt Sylvia, but he doesn't visit often which leaves the primary responsibility for Sylvia's care to Amy. Sylvia cannot be left unattended so Amy does not venture out very often. When she does, her close friend Kate (Marilyn Setu) or neighbor Trixie (Dana Harrison) will sit with Sylvia for her.

While browsing a quaint bookstore on one of those rare excursions, Amy finds three books, one of which appears to have value but she's not certain. Colin refers her to an expert, Gregory (Robert San Juan), who visits to appraise the book. That first meeting develops into a love match for Gregory and Amy. The challenge becomes how to nurture the truest romantic relationship of her life while also providing 24/7 care for her aunt.

Opdyke's portrayal of Sylvia is achingly honest. The small almost imperceptible shifts in and out of lucidity are graceful and lovely to watch. Thomas presents Amy as an empathetic character, but not pitiable. Her Amy simmers with unreleased passion mixed with intense loyalty. She effectively brings to light the dilemma for the caretaker facing an irresolvable challenge. San Juan is effusive and charming as Gregory, moving back and forth between understanding and frustration with palpable tension. While his dialogues with Amy are delightful it is his scene with Sylvia that is difficult to watch yet hard to look away. His face pixelates with the character's discovery.

These three actors handle the heaviness of the characters' story in a way that demonstrates understanding and respect. Setu, Black and Harrison effectively diffuse that heaviness with humor, especially Kate. Through them the effects of Alzheimer's beyond the immediate caretaker is explored and a caretaker's need for assistance, reinforced.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 35 percent of caregivers report that their health has declined due to their care responsibilities. This is almost double the reported experiences of caretakers for older individuals without dementia. Baby boomers are the second largest (behind millennials) segment of the U.S. population at 74.9 million. Carey Jane Hardy's play differs from others on this topic because it focuses on the selflessness of the caretaker.

Theatre Britain's choice of *Let It Be Me* for their last season is a timely and perceptive gift of love to their audience. **TJ**