

HUDSON GUILD THEATRE  
JULY 2018.  
NYSummerfest Presents  
**Anne Frank Lives**  
by Lawrence Kessenich

*A review by Triona Mc Morrow*

**I**n the play *Anne Frank Lives* by Watertown, MA. based playwright Lawrence Kessenich, the scene is set early on with a powerful monologue from Anne. Her accent is very effective, the lighting and set help to create just the right atmosphere.

This plot is well-conceived. Anne survives Bergen Belsen having been rescued by a Nazi soldier and driven out of the camp. She stays with a couple on her way back home; they nurse her back to health. However, on her trip to Amsterdam the bus she takes crashes, she bangs her head and suffers amnesia. She then goes to New York where she is offered a job and then Anne begins to tell people she is Anne Frank.

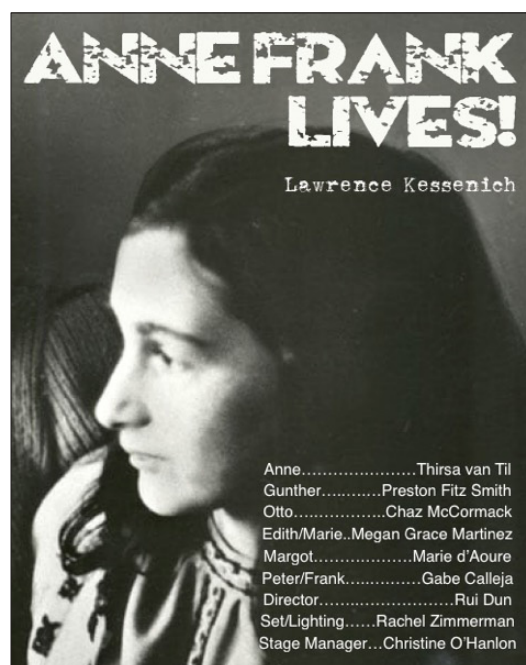
She is admitted to a psychiatric hospital with a diagnosis of delusional behavior. We are wondering throughout whether she is Anne Frank; this creates great tension and suspense. We meet other delusional characters at the hospital like Marie Antoinette and FD Roosevelt. This adds to our uncertainty as to whether this is the real Anne Frank.

The psychiatrist at the hospital played by Preston Fritz Smith has a big role in guiding Anne. He is convinced she is deluded. He plays the part with the gravitas we would expect.

Otto, her father played by Chaz McCormack, is convincing in the role and her encounters with Otto are fraught and very real. She has convinced Otto that she is his daughter, because of details she included in her letters to him. However, although she is finally free to leave the hospital she does not go with Otto. She has decided that she does not want to be Anne Frank any longer because she is afraid that people would think that everything about the holocaust was fiction.

Anne does leave the hospital alone. There is a scene, where a nurse silently dresses her for the outside, as if she is empowering her-- it is very effective. This contrasts with the start of the play where the nurse undresses her—a very powerful as a tool of dis-empowerment

The ghosts of Peter played by Gabe Calleja, Margot, played by Marine d'Aoure and Marie, played by Megan Grace Martinez work well in the play.



Thirsa van Til plays a very convincing and sustained Anne Frank. The rest of the cast perform well, it is almost a monologue with the rest of the cast supporting Thirsa.

The spare set and lighting were very atmospheric.

There is great attention to detail in the script. There was a small piece of plaid fabric attached with a paper clip to the program. The fabric was similar to the cover of Anne's diary, the significance of the paper clip was that they were invented by a German Jew.

This was a very enjoyable immersive experience of theater. I believe this play would travel well.