

**AISLE SAY San Francisco**

# **SPLITTING INFINITY**

**By Jamie Pachino**

**Presented by San Jose Repertory Theatre**

**Directed by Kirsten Brandt**

**At San Jose Repertory Theatre**

**101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA / (408) 367-7255**

**Reviewed by [Judy Richter](#)**

A brilliant astrophysicist, already the winner of a Nobel Prize, turns 49 (or 7 squared) and finds herself facing the proverbial midlife crisis: what to do next professionally and personally? That's where **Jamie Pachino's "Splitting Infinity,"** presented in its West Coast premiere by **San Jose Repertory Theatre,** begins.

The scientist, Leigh Sangold (**Amy Resnick**), takes refuge in alcohol and in an affair with her bright, handsome, 24-year-old postdoctoral student, Robbie March (**Chad Deverman**). Believing that anything can be proved scientifically if one can just figure out the right formula, they want to prove that God doesn't exist. However, she knows she can't get funding on the basis of that premise, so she reverses it: She and her student will try to prove scientifically that God does exist. In the meantime, she's confronted by her oldest and dearest friend, Rabbi Saul Lieberman (**Robert Yacko**), who has loved her for many years. He has just separated from his wife, apparently freeing him to try to woo her.

The action switches between the present and 27 years ago, when young Leigh (**Christine Sage Behrens**) and young Saul (**Kevin Dedes**) were students. Director **Kirsten Brandt** stages the action on two levels of scenic designer **Robin Sanford Roberts'** set. Most of the scenes with the young Leigh and Saul are seen on the upper level, while present scenes take place in Leigh's office on the stage level. The overall effect is like an astronomical observatory with stars sometime seen in the background (lighting by **Jaymi Lee Smith**).

Much of the dialogue involves scientific discussions along with questions of faith and Judaism. Leigh gets a poignant, tragic look at faith when Robbie is seriously injured in a traffic accident and his mother, Mrs. March (**Cindy Goldfield**), a devout Christian Scientist, chooses to have him removed from life support in hopes that faith will revive him.

Although the play's premise is potentially interesting, the dialogue sometimes seems stilted, especially in the scenes with young Leigh and Saul. Leigh's younger character isn't developed well enough to justify Saul's love, but at least Saul is wise enough to realize that the best he can hope for is friendship. One also has to wonder what Leigh

really wants. At one point, the mature Leigh talks about how much she enjoyed the warmth of Saul's family -- something missing from her own home. But when the mature Saul offers her his love, she's too self-absorbed to accept it. It's also unfortunate that the playwright has made Leigh such a heavy drinker, thus making her less sympathetic to the audience.

Despite the play's shortcomings, the production and acting are solid. The present characters are especially well done by Resnick, Deverman, Yacko and Goldfield. Costumes are by **Brandin Barón** with sound by **Paul Peterson**.

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[Return to Home Page](#)