



{Proof}

by David Auburn

LA WEEKLY

PROOF

What's the link between mathematics and madness? If you inherit your father's genius, will you also fall heir to his lunacy? Playwright David Auburn garnered a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award for this play, which poses these questions within the framework of a family drama.

The story begins a week after the death of Robert, an acclaimed mathematician (Brad Blaisdell, appearing in flashback); mentally ill in his last years, he'd been cared for by his mirthless, troubled daughter, Catherine (Teal Sherer). Alone and grieving on her 25th birthday, Catherine can just barely tolerate the presence of Hal (Ryan Douglas), a former student of Robert's searching through his papers for some shred of intellectual value.

More annoying to Catherine is her older sister Claire (Colleen Foy), in from New York and intent on whisking Catherine back with her — an option Catherine resents and resists. At the nub of the plot is whether, as Catherine claims, she wrote the mathematical proof uncovered in a locked drawer, or whether, as Hal and Claire suspect, Robert devised it during a period of clarity.

For this critic, Auburn's script has always registered as contrived and lacking subtlety — but this production blows away this bias by virtue of Sherer's uniquely winning portrayal. That the character — like the performer — is wheelchair-bound adds a layer of vulnerability that brings the play to life for me as it hadn't before. Make no mistake: Sherer's accomplished performance stands on its own; it's the material that's been enriched. Kudos also to Foy for excellent work. Bob Morrisey directs. NoHo Arts Center (Deborah Klugman)