

Help finding a perfect match

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Written by **Tova Kornfeld** in [Performing Arts](#)



The cast of *Crossing Delancey*, left to right: Jonathan MacDonald (Sam), Nina Tischhauser (Izzy), Joan Koebel (Bubbie), Helen Volkow (Hannah) and Jon MacIntyre (Tyler). (photo by Tracy-Lynn Chernaske)

Many of us are still looking for our *bashert*, our soul mate, that one person with whom we want to spend the rest of our lives. Sometimes, our family and friends try and guide us in our quest, sometimes we go it alone, double-clicking away in cyberspace, hoping to make the perfect connection and, sometimes, we hire a professional, a matchmaker.

While that last approach may seem old-fashioned and outdated, it can work – as the latest offering at Metro Theatre, *Crossing Delancey*, charmingly illustrates.

Set in New York in the 1980s, playwright Susan Sandler's romantic comedy has five characters. We meet 30ish yuppie bookseller Isabelle (Izzy) Grossman, who lives and works Uptown and is enamoured of Tyler, a non-Jewish local author who often drops by the shop to check on his book sales. Meanwhile, back on the Lower East Side, on the main thoroughfare, Delancey Street, Izzy's grandmother, Ida Kantor, has retained matchmaker Hannah Mandelbaum to find the perfect match for Izzy. What follows is a smorgasbord of Jewish humour peppered with witty Yiddish sayings – the evening's program contains a glossary of the Yiddish words and phrases used in the play and it is a good idea to read it over before the show begins – as we follow the action to what we expect to be a predictable ending. Or is it?



Bubbie (Joan Koebel) will do almost anything to see her granddaughter, Izzy (Nina Tischhauser), married. (*photo by Tracy-Lynn Chernaske*)

On stage, the action alternates from Bubbie's kitchen to the New Day Bookstore to a park bench. The curtain rises on the warm glow of the kitchen with Izzy (Nina Tischhauser) visiting Bubbie Ida (Joan Koebel) for their regular Sunday night tête-à-tête. Ida is the quintessential Jewish grandmother, doting on her granddaughter, making sure there is lots of food on the table (her claim to fame is her kugel), regaling anyone who will listen with tales of her youth, and being an all-around busybody. The night's conversation leads to a discussion about loneliness and finding a mate. Izzy is adamant that she is a modern woman and does not need a man to feel whole. Bubbie, who continually reminds the audience in a number of melodramatic asides of what a beauty she was in her prime and how she had three marriage proposals, begs to differ. Bubbie makes it clear that her goal, in whatever life she has left, is to find her granddaughter a husband, so that Izzy will have true happiness. Enter Mrs. Mandelbaum (Helen Volkow) with her collection of photographs of eligible men. What a catch she has lined up for Izzy – Sam Posner (Jonathan MacDonald), the pickle man who runs the local deli – “a

real mensch, a college graduate, a nice boy, goes to shul every day and, you could do worse.”

Unfortunately, Izzy is a bit of an intellectual snob and finds Sam bland and unromantic, so she shuns his attentions while focusing on Tyler Moss (Jon MacIntyre). Despite Izzy’s frosty attitude, Sam is smitten after their initial meeting and persists, using gastronomical courtship – an assortment of the “best pickles in New York” and chocolate cake – to woo her. He tells Izzy the story of a man whose life took a dramatic turn when he changed the type of hat he wore and that, although her Uptown life was “sociologically a million miles away” from Delancey Street, she, too, could change her style. The next day, a hat box arrives at Bubbie’s and Izzy has a new accessory – but will she wear it?

Each of the five cast members is strong but Volkow really shines. She is the stereotypical yenta with her cat eyeglasses, capri pants and oversized bosom (safely ensconced in a floral polyester top). She nails the New York accent and mannerisms.

Tischhauser adroitly handles Izzy’s metamorphosis from fantasist to realist in her choice of suitors, while MacDonald is an understated but effective beau, playing his role with calm and self-assurance. Koebel puts her heart and soul into Bubbie’s character and does a nice job with the Yiddish-heavy dialogue and the song and dance numbers. MacIntyre comes across as the stiff, self-absorbed man his character is.

One thing that Metro does particularly well is sets and this one does not disappoint. Divided into two, one side of the stage houses the bookshop; the other, Bubbie’s intimate apartment kitchen. The mood lighting and music, a mix of 1980s hits and klezmer tunes, bring it all together.

Kudos to director Alison Schamberger, with technical advice from decades-long *JJ* contributor Alex Kliner, for bringing this light-hearted fare to Vancouver audiences.

A quintessential Jewish play with Yiddish humour, free parking, an upstairs bar and lounge, what’s not to like? Just go and enjoy – a nice pick-me-up for the January blues.

Crossing Delancey runs Thursdays through Saturdays, Now through February 11, 2017 at 8 p.m., with two Sunday matinées, at 2 p.m., on Jan. 29 and Feb. 5. For tickets and more information, go to metrotheatre.com or call 604-266-7191.

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