

Streisand Jr lacks the acting gene

TUCKED away in a basement, a children's theatre by day, the Arts is not normally newsworthy. But last week press photographers clustered at the door because Jason Gould — 30-year-old son of Elliott Gould and Barbra Streisand, no less — is making his stage debut here in Jonathan Tolins's New York family drama. What starts as sitcom shifts into a neo-Shavian debate about genetic testing leading to eugenics, arguably akin to the Nazi pursuit of the *Urbemensch*.

Our narrator is the gay son of loving yet fundamentally anti-homosexual parents. David Gold (played by Gould) recalls the celebrations when his Jewish-princess sister, Suzanne (Gina Bellman), announced that she was pregnant. But it all ends grievously after her foetus is checked for hereditary diseases and for the (scientifically dubious) "gay gene". The results spark ethical arguments about her having an abortion.

Theatre

The Twilight of the Golds Arts Theatre

The play is called *The Twilight of the Golds* because, after medical complications, there will be no more Gold Jrs. The title also alludes to Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods*. As opera fan David explains, Wagner's Brünnhilde ultimately destroys everything, including herself, in the hope of a better, less corrupted future. This can be compared with Suzanne's plan to be rid of what she and her partner Rob believe will be a sexually "aberrant" child.

Alternatively, the new start might be made by David, breaking away from his prejudiced family. Either way, in this staging by Polly James, Suzanne's sitting room blurs into a pseudo-Wagnerian rocky outcrop. Here the Golds occasionally strike a pose, looking

suspiciously like the Von Trapps about to break into *Climb Every Mountain*.

Tolins's play does confront difficult contemporary issues. The trouble is that the explications of Wagner are lumbering, and the crisis conversations are just toe-curlingly corny. Mark Hadfield's Rob is at least disturbing; affable but increasingly fascistic. Bellman, though, is irritatingly mincing; Peter Laird as her father practically yodels his lines; and Sheila Allen, as mother, is peculiarly wooden.

But what of Jason G? Well, it would be over-dramatic to say his acting marks a twilight for the Gould-Streisand dynasty. He is cute enough, I suppose, but very self-conscious. If this production were a scientific experiment to establish whether star talent is genetically inherited, the result surely would be a resounding "nope".

Tickets: 0171-836 2132

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