

NETWORKING

The Newsletter of the Network Theatre Company

NETWORK THEATRE, 246A LOWER ROAD, WATERLOO, LONDON SE1 8SJ

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Winter 08

CHRISTMAS EDITION



OPPOSITES ATTRACT- review included



Romeo & Juliet: David Fraser & Eleni Young



Ophelia: Caroline Lazarus

Dear Networkers,

Welcome to the Christmas 2008 edition of Networking.

Well we're fast concluding the year with one show mid run - **The Three Musketeers** (directed by Leigh Shine) has completed its first week and if you haven't yet had chance to see it, grab a ticket for this coming week (the show continues Wednesday 10th- Saturday 13th December)- seasonal swashbuckling guaranteed to get you into the festive spirit!



We also have **Network Theatre's Christmas Party** lined up for **Friday 19th December**- dust off your festive get-up and head down to the arch for an evening of fun and merriment.



But before we get too carried away with mince pies and the like, let's not forget our last show, *Opposites Attract*, which was enjoyed by many- review included in this edition.

As we roll from one year to the next, check out the dates for your diary section. **An Ideal Husband** has now been cast so your next opportunity will be our musical **You're a good man Charlie Brown**.

Merry Christmas! The Editor x

All submissions are welcome.

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Opposites Attract by Bruce Kane A Review by Kirsty Eyre

Opposites attract apparently. Paula Abdul reckoned so. Did her kitsch 80s anthem and shoulder padded pop video spring to your mind too whenever the title was mentioned? Okay so Bruce Kane's medley of stage shorts was an opposite kind of attraction- six vignettes focussing on the absurdity of relationships between men and women and (much to the delight of some audience members) women and women (thanks to Imelda and Rosie)- romance, infidelity, emotional masochism and jealousy.

As they say, "variety's the spice of life", so Network Theatre's very own Variety Performance was a welcome change not seen since *Mixed Doubles* in 2005- also a hit. It was great to see several new faces on stage and others taking on a Director's role.

Instructions to the Audience (directed by Erica Miller) opened up the show with the twitch of a curtain and an audience address by a jaded Stage Manager (Jennie Rich), berating us for pre-empted jingling mobile phones, crunching sweets and dozing off - the monologue itself slightly amusing but not funny enough to set the world on fire. However Jennie's dead pan, dour delivery made the audience feel suitably unnerved. It would have been interesting to see how this would have worked going for a lighter irony, camping it up in cabaret drag queen style. Comic bitchiness is somehow more palatable from a heavily mascara'd man.

In the beginning (directed by Michael Mayne) saw Adam (Andy Bradshaw) and Eve (Genevieve Sibayan), meet in the Garden of Eden Bar & Grill, where they are served by the slippery Serpent (Theodore Forsi). A tongue-in-cheek power struggle between the male and female psyche and the absurdity of procreation ensues. Dimwitted Adam, which Andy Bradshaw had off to a tee with his blank facial expression and flexed pecs, professes that he "can lift big rocks" whilst Eve knows that "Pi is the ratio between the radius of a circle and its circumference." So why would she be interested in him? One drink of 'knowledge' served by the Serpent and the dynamics are reversed, Adam gaining a brain and Eve becoming subservient, concluding that knowledge is power. Whilst this short play was very well delivered, the script itself in my view was clunky and dated in terms of the battle of the sexes and generally could have been a lot wittier.



Adam (Andy Bradshaw) and the Serpent (Theodore Forsi)

Next up Ophelia (Caroline Lazarus) dished the dirt on Hamlet and the royals in *Dating Hamlet* (directed by Alison Gehring). This engaging monologue sees Ophelia desperate for Hamlet to propose. Caroline captured Ophelia's excitable and naive nature with rambling romanticisms rearranged now and then by a demure demeanour- she is after all to become a Princess.

Prince Charming's Complaint (directed by Rosie de Vekey) followed suit. This piece was a comic lament on Prince Charming's (Adam Simcox) ex-wives Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and Rapunzel. A self proclaimed Romeo, Prince Charming has a lot of love to give but evil stepmothers and sleeping disorders can really get in a man's way. This piece stood up as a stand up, largely down to Adam's natural talent for comic delivery. Has he ever considered doing stand up comedy? I enjoyed this piece so much I was disappointed that he couldn't have got it on with Little Red Riding Hood... think of how much mileage he could have got out of the wolf... and the grandmother for that matter!

Under the Balcony (directed by Sean McMullan) concluded Act 1 with a young Juliet (Eleni Young) on the balcony whilst handsome but hesitant Romeo (David Fraser) tries to pluck up the courage to approach her. Casanova (Michael Mayne) arrives on the scene, giving Romeo advice on seduction and the ways of womanising. The pseudo- Shakespeare script was well delivered by all. I would like to see David in particular perform Shakespeare pour de vrai.

Opposites Attract (directed by Erica Miller) formed Act 2 and served up a love triangle with a mean back hand. The first vignette was perhaps the most perceptive piece in terms of counterbalancing the relationship between Dave (Adam Simcox), his wife (Emily Godowski) and his mistress (Donna Moorley). As Dave bounced on the tennis court in his Dunlops, his wife provided the comfy slippers at home whilst his mistress donned the high heels.



Emily Godowski, Adam Simcox and Donna Moorley serve up a love triangle

Emily played the role of the housewife to perfection, though I do wish she would pump up the volume - she deserves to be heard. Donna relished the role of the mistress and had quite the exotic *Je ne sais quoi* most men would lust after. A shift in status, whereby Dave ditches his wife for his lover, results in an equally equilateral love triangle, cleverly expressed by the women swapping seats and attitudes. His wife adopts independence and adventure - getting a job, a lover and a convertible whilst his mistress takes on the household and kids. What shape will the future take? Maybe the love triangle will go full circle just to square things off.

A brief interlude saw Lois (Emma O'Shea) bartering for fidelity with her new squeeze, Mason (Theodore Forsi) having been burned by the elusive Robert, for whom she clearly still holds a torch. Mason gives her every reassurance she could ask for but its not good enough.

Meanwhile Ted (Rosie de Vekey) declares her love for Barbara (Imelda Maguire), a stranger in a bar. Barbara's ruthless rejections fuel Ted's desire further whilst Barbara is turned off by the prospect of having her cake and eating it. Just like Ted, she is only interested in the unobtainable. This see-saw of put-you-downs and pick-me-ups forms a never ending circle of emotional masochism. Assuming that this was written to be played by a man and woman, the script is dated, mildly amusing and moderately irritating but whoever chose to cast two women had a brilliant idea for this made it so much more fun and added a completely different dynamic.

Lois's next interlude is with her next conquest, Zeke (David Fraser), who again is taunted by her constant reference to Robert the b*stard, who never did this and never did that, but for whom she obviously still loves.

Then Greg (Sean McMullan) and Tanya (Rhyll Davis) hit it off at a party. They seem to be on the same wavelength, second guessing each other's personal life and finishing off each other's sentences and reading each other's minds building up into a crescendo kiss. Greg then upsets the apple cart by second guessing one too far and declaring "I don't know why I was so afraid to even broach the subject of sex. I knew you were going to say yes", undoing all the progress he had made. It was great to see Rhyll take a break from backstage to tread the boards looking every bit drop dead gorgeous in that red dress.

As her confidence grows, Lois becomes the femme fatale in her third and funniest interlude (Emma has great comic timing), this time with a brand new hunk, John (Daniel Robert Leigh). She recounts the endless list of men that she has slept with before predicatively concluding with a reference to Robert, who she loves to hate.

Meanwhile Carl (Theodore Forsi) and Mary (Suzy de Lezameta), their beer goggles intact, eye each other up in a bar. In the sober light of day, allusions shattered, they find themselves in bed where they are what they are- an accountant and a school teacher. Whilst discovering that they are not particularly compatible in the boudoir, things go from bad to worse when Mary's mother leaves a message on the answer machine. Both are desperate to call it a day whilst not wanting to upset the other one. The logistics of a tall Carl and a petite Mary with more bounce than a space-hopper added to the comedy value but could have been much further capitalised on.

Lois's fourth interlude divulged the violent relationship that she and Robert shared, to her next bit of fluff, Harold (Adam Symcox), only to conclude that volatility has its perks too.

Larry (Daniel Robert Leigh) and Martha (Alison Gehring) are a happily married couple with an agreement that they can date whoever they want on Tuesday nights. However Larry simply can't do it and instead goes to the cinema each week on his lonesome. When he finally 'confesses' this to Martha, she is betrayed (brilliantly acted by Alison). To regain her trust he promises to hook up with his secretary. Forgetting to kiss Martha goodbye before his date, Larry moves on but Martha is visibly gutted. Is she really the luckiest woman in the world?

And finally Lois appears with Potter (Alex Raskovic) who has everything- confidence, trustworthiness, kindness and wants to marry her - but is not Robert, who she predictably isn't happy with, because he's not Robert.

For me Opposites Attract as an evening offered many enjoyable cameo performances although I believe the plays themselves are, like Paula Abdul's shoulder pads, stuck in the 80s.





The Three Musketeers: An interview with Leigh Shine



1. I hear you saw Willis Hall's adaptation of The Three Musketeers at Sheffield's Crucible a while back. How did that run work and why were you so taken with it?

It struck me at the time as an extremely entertaining, large-scale production that an audience of all ages could enjoy, and I thought it would work as a good Christmas style production for Network.

2. In terms of swashbuckling, can we expect any sword fighting?

We can indeed, although sensibly we decided against using real swords for obvious reasons. I would like to say at this point a really big thank you to Michael Mayne who sweated over a hot cast for several weeks trying to thrust and parry them into shape. Considering the limitations of time and the fact that almost all of them had never picked up a sword before the results are pretty impressive.

3. Big cast, big production, what have been your main challenges?

Well, Big cast and big production for a start! Obviously the Crucible had a sizeable budget and probably a more realistic time frame to work within. It really is difficult getting so many people together so frequently in so short a time scale. Also through a combination of illness, holidays, deportation of a member of cast (don't ask!), and another unable to continue days before opening night there were certain obstacles that I couldn't have anticipated. These certainly made for a very interesting rehearsal schedule.

4. You have added a significant amount of sound to lift the show. What goes through your head when you match music to motion?

The use of sound for me in theatre is very important - I guess it partly goes back to my days working in the Cutting Room. An editors job is not only about cutting pictures together its also about creating an audio sound-scape that helps energise, inform and animate the images. It's something I like to do when working in theatre, because I feel it enhances the audiences experience enormously. It does however put a massive technical burden on the production as well.

5. Rumour has it that you've plumped for some role reversal. Can you elaborate?

In the good old spirit of British Panto I have taken some liberty with the casting, but I won't tell you what – other than the answer's behind you!

6. How do you think the show will fair?

I obviously hope people will enjoy it. The cast and crew have put in a massive amount of time and effort. it is quite an ambitious project and I would love to have had more time to work on it, but in the end you work within the constraints imposed and you are judged on the final product.

7. Why should people come to see this show?

Well if they don't we will come into their homes and thrust a well-placed sword into their cheese Board!

| Dates for your Diary | |
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| Further Performances of The Three Musketeers | 7.30pm, Weds 10th – Sat 13th December |
| Network Christmas Party | Friday 19th December |
| Reading of "You're a good man Charlie Brown" | 6.30pm for 7pm, 22nd January 2009 |
| Auditions for "You're a good man Charlie Brown" | 6.30pm, 28 th & 29 th January 2009 |
| An Ideal Husband performances | 7.30pm, 25 th – 28 th February |
| You're a good man Charlie Brown performances | 7.30pm, 1 st - 4 th April 2009 |
| Reading of A Mid Summer Night's Dream | 6.30pm for 7pm, 7th April 2009 |
| Auditions for A Mid Summer Night's Dream | 6.30pm, 15 th & 16 th April 2009 |
| Performances of A Mid Summer Night's Dream | 7.30pm, 8 th – 11 th July 2009 |