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Theater

Tartuffe



Bohemian Theatre Ensemble (see Fringe & storefront). By Molière. Translated by Ranjit Bolt. Dir. Peter Robel. With ensemble cast. 2hrs; one intermission.

Peter Robel's mostly traditional production of Molière's farce takes place in a semicontemporary no-man's-land, where corsets coexist with S&M gear and language contains both antiquated, aristocratic argot and present-day swear words. The piece is lively, visually stylish and savvy. It is also strangely, almost insistently, unfunny.

The trouble stems from the actors' insistence on barreling through Ranjit Bolt's translation, which maintains Molière's rhyming couplet structure. With few exceptions (including Devan O'Mailia's Mariane and Chris Ballou's Valère), the cast seems hell-bent on hitting the rhyme at the end of each line rather than enlivening the language within the verse—a fundamental misstep in an otherwise sophisticated production. The piece thus takes on a somnolent quality, lulling us through singsongy couplets into gentle indifference even in its most outrageous scenes. The only moments that elicit true laughs



MOLIÈRE THAN THOU BoHo gets steampunk'd.

are the silent ones—a sex gesture made in inappropriate company, or a character appearing suddenly in partial undress.

That said, Molière's tale—which chronicles the posing-as-pious Tartuffe's attempts to swindle and make a cuckold of the gentlemanly Orgon—is full of enticing wordplay and an amusing, ever-advancing plot. The production features warm, almost romantic lighting by Nick Belley and lush period-with-a-twist costumes by Kate Setzer Kamphausen. Molière's *deus ex machina* ending feels rushed and silly even by the standards of a farce, but it puts a tidy-enough bow on the proceedings to satisfy.

—Christopher Shea

Clutter



MadKap Productions (see Resident companies). By Mark Saltzman. Dir. Wayne Mell. With Andrew J. Pond, Edward Kuffert, Joe Mack, Michael J. Bullaro. 2hrs; one intermission.

Like their spiritual descendants, "Big Edie" and "Little Edie" Bouvier Beale of *Grey Gardens* fame, Homer and Langley Collyer have inspired a number of artistic interpretations of their shared eccentricities. Practicers of compulsive hoarding long before A&E made a TV series out of it, the reclusive Collyer brothers holed up in their Harlem brownstone, packing it to the ceilings with junk and spurring neighborhood gossip. Richard Greenberg's play *The Dazzle* and E.L. Doctorow's novel *Homer and Langley* are among the more distinguished works based on the brothers; Mark Saltzman's 2004 play is decidedly lower down the list.

The playwright, a recipient of multiple Emmys for his writing for children's television, seems to bring the storytelling instincts that make him effective in that arena to his work for the adult stage. Using the framing device of another pair of brothers, NYPD cops investigating the Collyers'



BROTHERS, KEEPERS Pond and Kuffert, from left, take inventory.

deaths—though both died in the house, the accumulated detritus meant their bodies were discovered weeks apart—Saltzman lays out both the facts and his fictions bullet-point style, repeating the important bits slowly and surely to make sure we get them. Aside from minor arguments between both pairs of brothers, dramatic stakes are wholly absent. And despite some appealing moments from Andrew J. Pond and Michael J. Bullaro as the younger siblings, Wayne Mell's production does the script no favors with its herky-jerky pacing and puzzling design.

—Kris Vire

PHOTOS: PETER COONIS