



A&E

## 'A Flea in Her Ear' soars

Latest drama department production is uproariously funny

by Nina Lukow | Apr 24 2014 | 04/24/14 3:49pm

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Michael Bailey | Courtesy UVA Drama Department

A murderous Spaniard, French men who cannot correctly pronounce their consonants, plenty of bushy moustaches, hairy men and a whole lot of running around and shouting in general confusion. All are featured in the uproariously funny comedy of errors and mistaken identities “A Flea in Her Ear,” presented by the drama department this Wednesday through Sunday at the Ruth Caplin Theatre.

The play, written by French playwright Georges Feydeau, is the best drama department performance I have seen in my two years at the University. Giggles and titters in the audience ruptured into fits of laughter as the play spiraled out of control, turning plot action into mayhem and pandemonium. By the end of the second act, the actors darted about the stage, shouting over each other and bumping into one another. As characters seemed to have no idea about what was going on, the audience — knowing only slightly better — hooted, hollered and laughed their hearts out.

“Good God, what a circus!” a character exclaims at one point, summing up the play in a single sentence.

The plot of “Flea,” with all its funny business and farce, can easily be boiled down to one man’s impotence and his wife’s flair for imagination, believing her husband to be unfaithful to her for his lack of, um, “interest.” The dialogue spews forth in rapid-fire sequence, bouncing from one character to another. In a play which relies on such quick line delivery, comedic timing in speaking and gesturing is key. Luckily, Assoc. Prof. Colleen Kelly, the director of the production, found an assortment of actors who did not fail.

College graduate students Amy Barrick and Chris Murray play off each other hilariously as husband and wife — I often felt as if I were watching a Spanish soap opera when the two appeared on stage — and little touches, such as third-year College student Alexander Bozicevich’s handicapped speech and fourth-year College student Ida Knox’s bouncy walk add greatly to the lively atmosphere of the show.

Perhaps the play’s greatest feat is that the performance clocks in at about 2 hours and 50 minutes with three separate acts and two intermissions — and I didn’t feel tired for a single second of it. Even when the third act slows down and the mistaken identity plot wears a bit thin, the show remains engaging. The costumes — apparently modeled after steampunk finery — were just as vibrant and playful as the script. Though the set, in its sparse decoration, leaves a little to be desired, I admired its challenging technicalities — especially the revolving room, which eagerly invites plot confusion.

All in all, I had a terribly funny evening and left with my sides in stitches. I highly recommend the play to everyone who seeks a good laugh. Trust me, you’ll get more than you bargained for.

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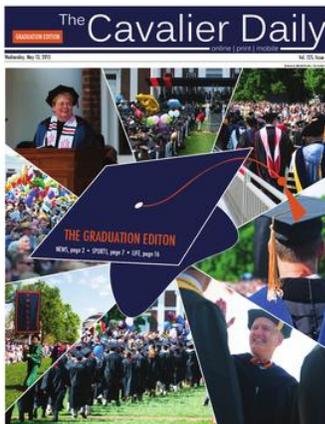
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