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Rollicking Good MILLIONAIRESS at Resident Ensemble Players

Posted by [Ruth K. Brown](#)

Financial challenges abound in our workaday lives. Recovery from recession is appearing, the Fed continues to control the supply of money, people fight to have enough money to both live and thrive while enormous banks and the wealthiest 1% of the US population continue to grouse about governmental controls imposed on their abilities to make more money. And this is 2015. Ubiquitous money ... the having and not having ... the earning and spending ... the saving and losing of it have long been included as theatrical themes. Seeing THE MILLIONAIRESS performed by The Resident Ensemble Players of UD (REP) reinforces the oft expressed concern that "we don't learn".

George Bernard Shaw is known as a literary genius and a master of the theatrical genre. While mastery conveys a sense of consistency over time, THE MILLIONAIRESS is not considered one of Shaw's finest works. It certainly contains the adroit comedic skewering of societal ills and personal idiosyncrasies Shaw is famous for but it simply takes a long time to do it. Thankfully, REP took a four act production and made it into two acts with four scenes total. To do that, the inventiveness and colorful artistry of Scenic and Costume Designer, Mathew J. LeFebvre was used to great impact. From the imposing painted curtain exterior to the highly complex and beautifully decorated locales, THE MILLIONAIRESS brings the audience into two worlds ... one with money and the other without. Using the stage carousel to keep scene changes timely and moving actors across them indicating time passages were clever and competent ways to put action into an otherwise didactic and possibly static piece of theatre. This is not the fault of REP. This is the way Shaw wrote this piece. Director, Ian Belknap, wrangled every possible laugh out of the script and the performers.

Epifania Ognisanti di Parerga (yes, that's her given name without adding Fitzfassenden as her married name) bursts onto the stage in the person of Elizabeth Heflin. This red-headed firebrand is unstoppable from her first moment until the final tableau. THE MILLIONAIRESS is about her. It is ALL about her. Shaw doesn't rein in the tirades and beratings and insufferableness until Act II so that leaves Heflin with the unenviable task of getting the audience to identify with her. Heflin manages to do this with a clever performance of rapid fire dialogue together with a convincing earnestness in her belief that

she is right and nobody else is. Heflin never shows any emotional depth but again this is a superficial character with a tremendous “father fixation” who does not change. The audience can never really deduce that any of Epifania’s decisions will make her happy. She simply presents it as an impossibility. Surrounding Epifania are characters who could be considered as checkers pieces on the board of Epifania’s life. They bump into her; they bounce off of her; they are overtaken by her but they never stymie her forward movements. In an ingenious use of costume and physicality, Lee E. Ernst portrays the unnamed sophisticated and altruistic Doctor, Epifania’s latest romantic interest and in a true tour de force re-costumes and re-focuses himself into a gnarled and oppressed shopkeeper.

Mic Matarrese as Alastair Fitzfassenden and Kathleen Pirkel Tague as Patricia Smith provide the proper amounts of aggression and compliance in their attempts to “escape” the machinations of Epifania. In something exactly opposite of this, Michael Gotch as attorney Julius Sagamore relishes the intricacies of dealing with such seemingly impossible people bringing the most appropriate aspect of the law to bear at the most appropriate time guaranteeing himself a healthy fee from all concerned. And then there is poor Adrian Blenderbland played for sympathy by John Renshouse. Much maligned by all others, Renshouse lights up his character with his own sense of self importance and his willingness to go against the system until his ultimate failure is made clear to him.

THE MILLIONAIRESS may not be the best Shaw play but in the hands of REP, it is a rollicking good production full of laughs and opinionated characters charging through a world that is actually not so different from the people and the situations found in today’s world.

See this production ... it will make you laugh and think about how things never seem to change!!

THE MILLIONAIRESS

Written by George Bernard Shaw

Directed by Ian Belknap

January 22 – February 8, 2015

Resident Ensemble Players

Roselle Center for the Arts

Newark, DE

Box Office: 302-831-2204

www.rep.udel.edu



Bio



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Ruth K. Brown

Ruth K Brown received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Arts from Madonna University in Michigan. But long before that Ruth was part of her community theater scene. Ruth is a respected and critically acclaimed actress in her home state of Michigan and once she moved to Delaware in 1995, she began to receive acclaim here also. She continues to experience the unique East Coast pleasure of being involved with theatres in multiple states. Since 2004, Ruth has received both state and regional performance awards . In 2009 Ruth stretched her expertise into directing garnering her state, regional and international awards in these efforts as well. Ruth is always working behind the scenes to support the beauty, power and timelessness of theatre around her. She is currently the Treasurer of the Delaware Theater Association (DTA) and is Secretary of the Eastern States Theatre Association (ESTA). Ruth is and always will be a lifelong advocate of the advantages and benefits of community based theatre.

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