Two Too Funny Studio Romps

Merely based on the clever poster, I already knew that the new production at IPFW Department of Theatre would be first-class family entertainment, although I was concerned that if it ran past 10:30, it might be self-indulgent. Lighthearted fun, two frothy one-acts—that’s what I expected. Never mind what Higgs would have had to say about it. Higgs wasn’t there and I was. But wait. That’s how Moon and Birdfoot, the hack critics muddling through another night’s reportage in The Real Inspector Hound would open their reviews. I’m sure of it. But I’m happy to make it three thumbs up—two of their fictional plus mine—for the comedies in the tiny Studio Theatre on campus.

There is something magnetic about watching people getting silly on purpose under spotlights in front of a thousand. It grants one want to join in the fun. Both The Pot Boiler and Hound insist on kicking aside the fourth wall and hauling us along into the silliness, satire, parody, farce and random absurdities. First, we learn how to write a play from a master who can’t help but boil over at his genius, and then all manner of manner breaks loose in Muldoon Manor.

Director Mark Ridgeway has dusted off these two funny little comedies of a certain age and put a nimble cast to work to bring them into the comedic light of day, or actually night. And the fact that the second, and longer, one-act lures two critics into the action only serves to make The Real Inspector Hound an irresistible Milk Bone for any commentators destined to sit and stay in the cheap seats.

The Pot Boiler by Alice Gerstenberg has been around since 1916 when vaudeville ruled the boards. Nick Tash takes charge as Mr. Sud, the playwright. He is all too ready to demonstrate his genius to the in-
nocent student Miss Woudby by narrating as the cast of his latest work run through a dress rehearsal. Sud’s dramatis personae are Miss Ivory (played by Haley Bandt), Mrs. Pencil (Carol Thompson), Mr. Inkwell (Nathan Garner), Mr. Ruler (Brian Warner), Mr. Ivory (Scott Maughy) and the plucky stagehand Gus (Chase Francs).

From Garst’s hilarious trembles to Tash’s ex-ta-vagant sense of mischief, the opening is short but tuneful, silly and a perfect appetizer for the Stoppard main course.

The second part of the evening is devoted to Tom Stoppard’s 1968 one-act The Real Inspector Hound, which has mellowed over time and may even have gained some timely appreciation of his spoof of the form from fans of Downton Abbey’s Country House.


FPT Stages a heartwarming Tale

There are certain plays that will never lose their popularity with the American public, and You Can’t Take It With You is definitely one of them. Written by Kaufman and Hart during the height of the Great Depression (1936), it found a way to take people away from the drudgery of their lives for a couple of hours. You can understand the mood of the country in that year by the simple fact that this play won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. It is one of the few comedies ever to do so.

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