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THEATER BY SHARLEEN NELSON

Glitz and Glam

ACE's *La Cage Aux Folles* a blast.

A truly good play succeeds in whisking its audience away from the complexities of the outside world. ACE's production of *La Cage Aux Folles* accomplishes that and more.

For all its rollicking kitsch and camp, *La Cage Aux Folles* is really a love story about George and Albin, a middle-aged homosexual couple whose 20-year relationship is put to the test. Together they own a fabulous glam palace where George plays host to a bevy of gorgeous drag queens and to the show's grande dame, Zaza.

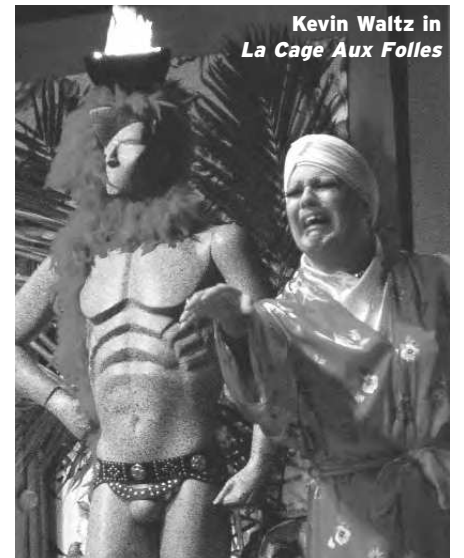
The trouble begins when George's 24-year-old son, Jean-Michel, the result of a brief heterosexual encounter years back, announces his engagement to the daughter of Edourd Dindon, the homophobic deputy general of the morality party who is bent on shutting down all the transvestite clubs in town. Moreover, he's invited the Dindons to dinner.

Hoping to make a good impression on his future in-laws, but embarrassed by his father's unconventional lifestyle, Jean-Michel requests that his biological mother, whom he's never met, stand in for one night as his other parent. This sends Albin, who has raised him since birth, into a tailspin. Yet to accommodate him, Albin agrees to "act like a man" and pose as his Uncle Al, toning down his flamboyant apartment from the contemporary digs of a gay couple to a holy shrine.

But when the Dindon's arrive, things quickly begin to unravel. Jean-Michel's mother has failed to show. Dinner is ruined. Trying their best to keep up the charade, Albin sheds his manly suit and becomes Jean-Michel's wholesome mother. While dining at a fancy, upscale restaurant the ruse is exposed, but the clever restaurant owner Jacqueline uses a little blackmail to save the day.

Enough can't be said about Kevin "KJ" Waltz's outstanding performance as the divinely flamboyant Albin/Zaza. Waltz certainly has that *je ne sais quoi*, capturing the comedy and pathos of both his onstage persona of diva Zaza as well as the tender and easily wounded Albin. Part drama queen, part highly sensitive creature, Waltz is a stunning and dynamic presence onstage, and his poignant rendition of "I Am What I Am" is nothing short of inspired.

Bruce McCarthy puts in an equally solid performance as George. Indeed, he and Waltz compliment one another, but McCarthy deserves as much praise. His ability to stir emotion and convince us of his unflagging devotion to Albin is evident in the delivery of such



Kevin Waltz in *La Cage Aux Folles*

tender love songs as "Look Over There" and "Song in the Sand."

Teryl Hawk is aptly cast as Anne, Jean-Michel's sweet and demure bride-to-be. Hawk's strong, clear vocals are particularly noted in "With You on My Arm." Jason Darcy, however, is weak in his depiction of Jean-Michel. His performance suffers from a lack of emotion and passion.

Bill Furtick is convincing as the stuffy, righteous moralist Edourd Dindon, and with his long beard he makes a most outrageous drag queen.

Maida Belove-McCarthy is quite funny as Mme. Dindon. At first prudish, and then childishly all atwitter, Belove-McCarthy delivers her lines with singsong glee.

Robin Spoerl is fantastic as the couple's sassy butler/maid Jacob. Stealing the show with his hilarious affectations and outrageous ensembles, it's obvious that Spoerl is having a tremendous amount of fun with his role. Jennifer Sellers Andersen is très fabuleux as the classy restaurant owner, and Chris Columbus does a fine job as the show director. Last, but certainly not least, are the fabulous La Cagelles, an energetic mix of both male and female entertainers.

Director Joe Zingo and his crew have outdone themselves with this production. The costumes are delightfully bright, gaudy and stunning. The set design is exceptional — from the club's flashy stage equipped with twinkling marquee lights to Albin and George's upscale apartment to the quaint sidewalk café, the action moves seamlessly from one scene to the next via revolving sets. The only problem seemed to be a lack of room onstage at times to accommodate all the La Cagelles at once, although it didn't detract from the performance. **EW**

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