



Retelling History

Lord Leebrick's *Copenhagen* offers complex themes.

Combining physics, philosophy, morality and human relationships, Lord Leebrick's production of Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* attempts to deconstruct the events of a single meeting that occurred between two renowned physicists in 1941. Six decades later, mystery and contradiction still surround the brief exchange between German physicist Werner Heisenberg and Danish physicist Niels Bohr.

At the time of Heisenberg's visit to Bohr in Copenhagen, the city was under German occupation and Heisenberg himself was working

for the Nazis. Despite their history of friendship and camaraderie, Bohr wonders whether Heisenberg is coming as friend or foe.

In the play, Bohr, his wife Margarethe, and Heisenberg reunite in the afterlife to re-draft several possible versions of the meeting. Was Heisenberg building the bomb for Hitler? Was he withholding crucial calculations to undermine the program? Or did he simply not know the correct calculation? Did Bohr have knowledge of the status of the Allies' nuclear efforts? Was either of them responsible for changing the entire course of history?

Set on an oval platform representative of an atom, most of the action occurs within the nucleus or center. Heisenberg, when not interacting in the center with Niels and Margarethe, orbits around the stage much like an electron.

The set designers convey another message through an interesting use of props. Two chairs, the only props used in this production, illustrate the emotional coming together and moving apart of the two physicists as they try to understand each other. When the characters are at odds, the chairs are moved and the actors sit apart at the opposite edges of the small stage. When the chairs are stationed at the center, the actors are in consensus.

Departing from its typical horseshoe seat-

ing, Lord Leebrick has arranged the seating in a circle around the stage for the production. The arrangement implies Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle of quantum mechanics: Reality is what can be measured and the observer is an integral part of that reality.

Copenhagen is a challenging play. The actors tackle an enormous amount of complex dialogue laden with historical facts, names, dates and events, not to mention quantum physics. The three-person cast handles the complexity and emotional challenges of the script exceptionally well. William Campbell as Niels Bohr realistically portrays the older mentor torn between fatherly affection and betrayed friendship. Robert Hirsh's Werner Heisenberg masterfully alternates between repentance and arrogance. Diane Johnson, as Margarethe Bohr, is equally solid as the central observer and brutally honest archivist.

The play, a deep thought experiment with strong themes set against the ethical dilemmas that defined the 20th century, is also extremely challenging for the audience. It doesn't deliver tidy answers, but it does provide more than enough questions to keep you pondering the meaning of reality, ethics, and friendship long after the play is over. *Copenhagen* runs April 21-24 and 28-30 at Lord Leebrick Theatre. **EW**

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From Rags to Riches

Cottage Theatre puts on the classic tale of *Oliver!*

Inspired by Charles Dickens' turn of the century novel *Oliver Twist*, Lionel Harts' musical adaptation opens on a drab London workhouse run by Widow Corney and Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle. A group of ragged, underfed orphans file to the table singing "Food, Glorious Food" as they wait in line for their daily ration of gruel.

One young orphan, Oliver, has the audacity to ask for more. That raises the ire of Bumble and he sells the boy to an undertaker. Alone and afraid among the coffins, Oliver dreams of a better life. *Oliver!* is the story of his adventures along that journey.

Although she is playing a boy, Kaitlyn Sage is convincing as Oliver. Sage's strong, clear vocals resonate, particularly in her touching rendition of "Where is Love?" Likewise, Holly Laycock, whose authentic cockney accent is first-rate, plays a credible Artful Dodger, a young pick-pocket who befriends Oliver. Mike Tripp is appropriately scruffy, making the

role of conniving gang leader Fagin his own. Tripp's comical gestures and dance numbers are especially notable.

Harold Turnquist turns in an amusing performance as the pompous, self-important Mr. Bumble. His excellent vocals and formidable presence on stage are delightful. Larry Maltz stands out as the mortician, Mr. Sowerberry. Other solid performances include Caroline Cramer as Nancy, and Davis Smith, who makes a menacing Bill Sykes (a gang member) with his snarling voice and dark, sinister appearance.

Although Cottage Theatre has done a fair job with *Oliver!*, the production is not on par with previous musicals put on by the theater. In a musical, in which songs rather than dialogue drive the story, it's important to hear the lyrics. While musically exceptional, the live orchestra often drowned out the voices onstage. Additionally, while the use of players entering and exiting worked well in some scenes, it seemed to be an overused device in others.

Still, the play is entertaining and the high-energy enthusiasm of the ensemble of adults and adorable kids is infectious.

Oliver! performances: 8 pm Friday and Saturday, 2:30 pm Sunday. - Sharleen Nelson

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