



JENNY GRAHAM

Corrupting Power

Anthony Heald has landed some plum parts in recent years at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival – Shag/Shakespeare in *Equivocation* and Shylock in last year’s *Merchant of Venice* – and the actor once again finds himself at the center of a thickly layered, ambiguous play, this one about the nature of power and religious belief. Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure*, the festival’s *Illuminations* guide explains, just before he began working on the four major tragedies (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*). Certainly the script flirts with both comedy and tragedy as Heald’s Duke of Vienna (“an American town,” explains the playbill) pretends to leave town just to find out what his deputy, Angelo (René Millán), will do with his newfound power. Turns out Angelo doesn’t know much about mercy. The town is full of pimps, whores and kids who sleep together before they’re married, and Angelo’s determined to clean it up (the setting for the play is 1975, with Vienna sitting near the Mexico/U.S. border). The plot includes the Duke disguising himself as a friar; the efforts of Isabela, a novice nun (Stephanie Beatriz, quite good in a role tremendously different from last year’s Maggie the Cat), to free her brother Claudio (Frankie Alvarez) from the death sentence Angelo gives him for getting his girlfriend (Alejandra Escalante) pregnant; and a bunch of side plots involving Lucio (Kenajuan Bentley, sublimely masterful in the comic role), Mistress Overdone (Cristofer Jean) and Pompey (Ramiz Monsef, also quite good). The self-proclaimed incorruptible Angelo finds himself intensely attracted to Isabela, telling her that if she gives him her body, he may save her brother’s life. Can the Duke save everyone? Should he? And what about his own weaknesses? Go to this messy, multi-layered, complex production and let Las Colibri – a mariachi band – and Clint Ramos’ set transport you to the halls and brothels of power, where you can discover the answers for yourself. – *Suzi Steffen*

What Can’t Be Said, What Must Be Said

Dead languages pile up and spill over the set of *The Language Archive*, each towering stack of boxes threatening to bury their archivist in the tapes and transcripts of loss. In Julia Cho’s recent play, men and women can’t communicate and can’t quite figure out why. The script mixes funny, touching, realistic, heartstring-tugging, clichéd, whimsical and absurd elements in a two-act package that wields irony as a blunt weapon (language archivist George, played by Rex Young, speaks many language but can’t communicate with his wife – get it?), though it often redeems itself through painfully, awkwardly tender moments. The plot centers on the yearnings of George, his wife Mary (Kate Mulligan, who’s marvelous) and his besotted assistant Emma (Susannah Flood, whose gawky/cute mannerisms work well here). Add a bit of the “our elders from faraway villages aren’t perfect but impart wisdom to us” trope, as the last two speakers of Elloway (Richard Elmore and Judith Delgado) find meaning at the end of their lives and the life of their language, then mix in a few set pieces in train stations, bakeries and language classes and let rise. Delgado, a newcomer to the festival, stands out as the language teacher, though the entire cast produces a surprisingly strong warmth, wringing it from their characterizations rather than the script itself. Still, what with the occasional flight of poetic fancy from George, a marvelous smell at just the right time (how *did* you cue that, OSF?), jokes about the Dutch facility with languages and the palpable sadness underlying every moment, *The Language Archive* offers a satisfying couple of hours in the immediacy of the New Theatre. – *Suzi Steffen*



DAVID COOPER

Modern Day Misanthrope

We still love the man who hates everything. And why wouldn’t we, when Moliere’s misanthrope says everything we all wish we could? To enjoy his cynicism with hipster jokes replacing the 17th-century rhyming couplets, you can see a modern adaptation in the most unlikely of theaters. “It’s where you go to learn how to think, not *what* to think,” student Jonathan Manley says of Gutenberg, a small, great books liberal arts college perched at 18th and University. The soul-warmingly beautiful dining room of this tiny college will be transformed March 3 into a theater, where a small cadre of students and their professor will turn *The Misanthrope* into a modern pop opera. Really? Yes. And it rocks, literally. Set in an independent recording studio, the production transforms the cynical Alceste into Alex, the last remaining record producer with integrity. He hates everything about the music business with the exception of music and CJ (Moliere called her Célimène), an indie-rock goddess with a penchant for drawing male attention. Whereas Moliere’s classic satirized the French aristocracy, this production is likely to hit closer to home. Tim McIntosh, a local actor and award-winning playwright, moonlights as a professor at Gutenberg. He was struck by the timelessness of the 17th-century play while teaching *The Misanthrope*. Hearing the music of his student, Jonathan Manley, wafting down the narrow corridors of Gutenberg’s dormitories, McIntosh hatched a plan to work with his students in modernizing Moliere’s great play. After ten months and countless hours spent in their forum-like rehearsal space, a theatrical gem has taken shape. Energy, intelligence and collaboration have collided, creating a whirlwind of a play. *P.R.; An Indie-Opera*, served up with a fabulous Gutenberg family dinner, plays only three nights. Grab your ticket while you can. *P.R.; An Indie-Opera* runs at Gutenberg College (1883 University St.) March 3, 4 and 6. Tickets are \$5. Dinner is at 6:15 pm; the play starts at 7. For tickets call 683-5141. – *Anna Grace*

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