

Sharper 'Triumph' depicts game of love and chance

[By Karen D'Souza](#)

[Mercury News](#)

Article Launched: 10/01/2007 01:38:10 AM PDT

It's love at first smite at San Jose Repertory Theatre where "The Triumph of Love" is currently holding court, launching the theater's fall season in a distinctly elegant fashion.

Happily, San Jose Rep and Cal Shakes' co-production of this elaborate Marivaux romp has gained quite a bit of radiance since its lackluster debut in Orinda in August. If the slapstick bits in Lillian Groag's production still need sharpening, the heart of the 1732 romantic comedy now beats wildly under its lavish period finery.

This 18th century game of love and chance comes off as funnier and more moving than before. Certainly the first-class ensemble has fine-tuned its symphony of heaving bosoms and swooning heads but also the lighting and music are cast into higher relief at the Rep than under the stars at Cal Shakes' outdoor amphitheater. This "Triumph" sweeps us away with not just the pleasures of love, but also its lies and sighs and regrets.

Princesses are supposed to sparkle like diamonds but, alas, Leonide (Stacy Ross) cuts like one as well. She ruthlessly thrusts herself into the home of the dashing but naive Agis (Jud Williford) with little concern for his life. Since it was her ancestor who usurped the throne out from under his, she casts off her true identity, pulls on a pair of britches and plunges headlong into a mélange of masquerade, bon mot and misunderstandings. Ross summons up the formidable arrogance of the princess, as well as her wit and guile.

Williford seems to be channeling Dudley Do-Right with every simper and stammer. Most notably, the two actors generate far more chemistry than before and their tour-de-flirts now pop off the stage.

Still, the soul of the play lies not in its young lovers, but in its lonely hearts. To woo Agis, Leonide must sweet-talk his protectors, Hermocrates (the estimable Dan Hiatt) a silk-draped sultan of a philosopher, all aesthetics and no guts, and his sister Leontine (the magnetic Domenique Lozano), a shy flower of a woman throbbing with stifled longings. Only when she has them pining out of their minds with love for her, does she reveal her true self. Alack! Happily ever after holds no solace for them.

While the production still strikes some false notes in its post-modern comedic moments, (despite a bravura play-within-a-play bit by Ron Campbell as the goofy gardener Dimas), the romance of the piece is now as irresistible as it is unsettling. And that's a "Triumph" indeed.

"The Triumph of Love"

Mercury News

by Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux

The upshot: An elegant game of love and chance that sparkles far brighter now than at its premiere this summer at Cal Shakes.

Where: San Jose Repertory Theatre, 101 Paseo de San Antonio

When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays, 8 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays, 3 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays

Through: Oct. 21

Running time: 2 hours 25 minutes, one intermission

Tickets: \$15-\$59. (408) 367-7255 or go to www.sjrep.com

Contact Karen D'Souza at kdsouza@mercurynews.com or (408) 271-3772. Find more of her stories and a link to her blog at www.mercurynews.com/karensouza

http://www.mercurynews.com/arts/ci_7050660?nlick_check=1