



## Two San Jose Rep Reviews in One

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

We saw the San Jose Rep production of "[Legacy of Light](#)" this past weekend, and it was WONDERFUL. Everything we love about theatre: great writing, great performances, humor, deep thoughts to keep you talking even after the play is over.

The play merges the stories of two heroines from two timelines:

- In the 1700's: Physicist Émilie du Châtelet, a young poet and lover of famous French philosopher Voltaire
- Modern day: Astrophysicist Olivia and her husband contemplate her discovery of the birth of a star

The common theme for both women is career vs. childbirth. The writing is brilliant, and even explains dark matter and the measurement of mass vs. velocity, in an understandable way. Lots of humor as well—and play close attention to which actors are playing parts in both timelines, so you can fully appreciate the humor of the funniest lines in the play, **"Every action triggers an equal and opposite reaction!"** The most humorous quoting of [Newton's laws of physics](#) ever!

We especially enjoyed the following performances (click [here](#) for cast bios):

- Carrie Paff (Olivia/Wet Nurse): We loved her in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde where she played both his manservant (tall, lanky), and a femininely sinister Mr. Hyde
- Rachel Harker (Emilie Du Chatelet): Wonderful portrayal of mature intelligence, maternity, and sensuality
- Kathryn Tkel (Millie/Pauline): A little screechy as a playful Pauline, but her Millie was so endearing and wonderful she stole most scenes she was in.
- Robert Yacko (Voltaire): He seemed over-dramatic at first, but as the show went on, we realized that Voltaire was just larger-than-life.

For a more complete review, click [here](#).

This show reminded us a lot of the [Splitting Infinity](#) show from the San Jose Rep's 2008-2009. Both were directed by Kristen Brandt, and shared themes of astrophysics vs. love. Robert Yacko performed in both. Brandin Baron was Costume Designer for both--the costumes were more fun in this show. Bruce Elspenger was also the Casting Director for both shows--well done!

We hope to be seeing more of Kristen's direction in future shows. Legacy of Light was very, very enjoyable!

Good timing too, as it is time to renew subscriptions for next season, and we were not so happy with the last show we saw in January.

**The Dresser** is one of DH's all time favorite shows, he had been looking forward to seeing in onstage for the first time, after watching [the movie](#) again and again. I knew the basic storyline of the decline of a Shakespearean actor, and his faithful servant, Norman, but I had never seen it before.

What we liked:

- James Carpenter delivered his usual stunning performance as Norman. Lively, devoted, clearly in love, he was perfect!
- The staging--they managed to show us the "backstage", *onstage*, with the actors taking their bows and performing to whomever was standing behind the left curtain in the real backstage. As a veteran of many high school stage crews, I laughed to think what temptation there would be to make monkeyfaces at the performers and break their concentration.
- Costumes were wonderful (as you can tell by my last post, a weakness of mine)
- I liked the storyline--interesting dynamic, though it was funny to think almost everyone in the show was apparently in love with "Sir".

What we didn't like:

- The pacing was slow. I **love** theatre, and I was embarrassed to realize I was dozing off during some of this show. The last time I have done that during a live performance, I was pregnant. No such explanation this time around.
- The performances were convincing, except *\*every\** line was delivered as if it was the most important line of the play. It was hard to fault the actors, so it may be the direction that was off.

Anyway, based on the strength of Legacy of Light, we've renewed again for next year, but it was a close decision. San Jose Rep is shrewd in its line-ups, as I recall being similarly swayed in past years. They're no dopes.