

## Legacy of Light shines at the SJ Rep

By [Cynthia Corral](#)

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(l to r) Émilie du Châtelet (Rachel Harker) spends time with her lover, Saint-Lambert (Miles Gaston Villanueva)

**[Legacy of Light](#)** contains great characters, new ideas, and multiple themes and plots. It presents both comedy and tragedy, fictional and non-fictional characters, and keeps you enthralled even during science lectures which actually teach you something. Moving from France in the 1700s to present day New Jersey, there is a great deal going on during the play, yet it is never complicated or distracting.

This amazing, original story is as fresh and new as the ever present apples in the production. It was refreshing to see something so completely modern even in scenes that took place 250 years ago. It's also a story about both science and love. So many opposite subjects are tackled here and yet playwright **Karen Zacarias** successfully ties them all together. It is absolutely worthy of being awarded "Best New American Play" by the American Theatre Critics Association.

Just some of the questions this play brings up:

What makes a mother? Do you have to give birth to be a mother, and if you do give birth does that make you a mother? What if you're not sure you really want the child you asked a surrogate to carry for you? What if you know you will die in childbirth and thus deprive the world of all the amazing scientific ideas in your head? Which will make you immortal:



(l to r) Millie (Kathryn Tkel) woos Peter (Mike Ryan) and Olivia (Carrie Paff) into choosing her as their surrogate.

your children or your ideas?

There is also a lot of science in this story, and much of it is taught very clearly to the audience. We learned about  $E=mv^2$ ,  $E=mc^2$ , the birth of planets, and dark matter. Well, we learn that we don't know anything about dark matter at all, but still. I thought the female scientists were very inspiring, especially with all the obstacles they faced as women: **Émilie du Châtelet** was not allowed to publish under her own name, but modern day women still have very little chance of winning a Nobel Prize in science.

The six actors in the play are all amazing, and most of them played two characters each. I was particularly impressed with

**Kathryn Tkel**, who was in the SJ Rep's *Secret Order*. I think she does an outstanding job playing young Millie the surrogate mother, as well as a young girl in 18<sup>th</sup> Century France, and it appears her acting skills have grown considerably this year. **Rachel Harker** was marvelous in last month's *The Dresser*, and she is marvelous again here as *Émilie*. And I thought **Carrie Paff** was most excellent as the awkward scientist Olivia who doubts her mothering capabilities.

My guest and I left the theater with a terrific feeling of having just seen something new, original and fresh. It was engaging, funny, emotional, and inspirational and we even learned a lot! I can't recommend this show enough.

### [Legacy of Light](#)

March 24 – April 17, 2011

by Karen Zacarias

directed by Kirsten Brandt



Émilie du Châtelet (Rachel Harker) looks on as Voltaire (Robert Yacko) and Saint-Lambert (Miles Gaston Villanueva) duel over her.



Millie (Kathryn Tkel) is comforted by Olivia (Carrie Paff)