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Classic legend of Princess Anastasia becomes mediocre stage production

By STAN KLICH

Every once in a while, a well-written play that has had all the benefits of previous rave reviews and the potential to become an excellent production is transformed into merely a "good effort." Stage Centre's production of *Anastasia* at the Fairview Library Theatre managed to fall into this category. While it wasn't a total write off, it could have been better.

Adapted by Guy Bolton from Marcelle Mourette's original script, *Anastasia* is a good play that has an interesting plot and keeps the audience in a state of anticipation. It is unfortunate then that this production has so many flaws and weak performances by essential characters.

The play is set in 1926 in the parlor of a former Russian prince who was lucky enough to escape execution during the Bolshevik revolution eight years earlier. Now living in Berlin as a taxi driver, Prince Bounine, played by Ronald Young, is heading a search for the only surviving member of the Russian Royal fam-

ily, but profit is his motive, rather than love for the fallen regime.

Before the revolution, the Czar deposited ten million pounds in various European banks, so that Princess Anastasia, rumoured to have escaped Russia after the execution of her family, will be able to reclaim her inheritance.

Fortunately, just as the Prince's associates Chernov and Petrovin, played by Lloyd Dean and Larry Feldman, are growing pessimistic about the search, the Prince finds an amnesiac girl, played by Marilyn Meitz, who has told a hospital nurse that she is the Princess of Russia. Similar in appearance and bearing scars that the Princess had supposedly received in her escape, Prince Bounine plans to transform her into Princess Anastasia and collect his reward for finding her. Bounine, Chernov and Petrovin begin their work and it appears that they may be able to pull off their masquerade, but as the play unfolds so does the true identity of Anna.

The remainder of the play is focused on the testing of Anna and whether or not she is the real Princess. The true test comes when she

meets the Imperial Grandmother, played by Joyce Clark. Having been acquainted with Prince Bounine's shiftiness in the past, the Imperial Grandmother is reluctant to believe that he has found her granddaughter. It is Anna's testimony that is essential for Bounine's plot to work.

Anastasia has many nice surprises and its ending is more well conceived, but this production is marred by inconsistent acting.

While the portrayal of Anastasia and the Imperial Grandmother are quite good and do the play justice, the supporting acting of Dean and Feldman is shallow.

Another major setback of this production is the poor acting of Young in his portrayal of Prince Bounine. Constantly stumbling over his lines and over-acting the arrogance of the Prince through superfluous hand movements, Young adds little to the play as a principal character.

Fortunately, the strength of the performances of Meitz and Clark as Anastasia and the Imperial Grandmother, together with fine performances by minor characters, make *Anastasia* a worthwhile venture.

Not too much fun in *Bed*



FUZZY NAVELS AND OTHER BODY PARTS: Steve Guttenberg and Elizabeth McGovern prepare to rack up the balls and sink the psychopathic killer into the side pocket.

By LEWIE JORDAN

The ingredients are there: the good looking leading man, two sexy female co-stars, a slimy killer and a pair of hard-nosed cops. Add to that lots of close-ups, a few naked bodies and plenty of chase scenes on slick rainy nights. Put this all together with numerous plot twists and turns and you should have the recipe for a top notch thriller. However this isn't quite the case with *The Bedroom Window*.

The film stars Steve Guttenberg as Terry Lambert, a young architect involved in an affair with his boss's wife and the eventual prime suspect in a string of mysterious murders. Guttenberg undertakes his first highly dramatic role and it is vastly different from the characters he has portrayed in *Diner*, *Short Circuit* or *Police Academy*. Although Guttenberg is likeable enough in this role, he is somehow unconvincing, lacking the charm and presence which the role requires. The two female co-stars are played by Elizabeth McGovern, who was last seen in

Once Upon a Time In America, and French star Isabelle Huppert. Both actresses perform well in their respective roles.

The film is billed as a romantic thriller in the tradition of the master of suspense. That master is none other than Alfred Hitchcock and many similarities to his films can be seen. From the title alone, comparisons can be drawn to the Hitchcock classic *Rear Window*, with the Guttenberg character through a little bit of leniency, being seen as a Jimmy Stewart type.

Although the film has no major flaws, much of *The Bedroom Window* has been seen before in movies of this genre. Much of the film is shot on location in Baltimore. A great deal of the action occurs at night on wet rainy streets from a cinematic perspective, the film is nice to watch. The story, although quite complex, is sound and so is the dialogue between the characters.

However, there is something in *The Bedroom Window* that's missing: intensity. The film lacks the knock-out punch that it inherently

demands. The secret love affair that takes place is not fiery enough, the killer not evil enough, and the danger and immediacy of the situation is not exposed enough. As a result, the audience is left without that hanging-on-the-edge-of-their-seats tension.

Perhaps the blame can be laid on writer-director Curtis Hanson, whose only previous work of note as a director was *Losin' It*, with Tom Cruise. Hanson keeps the plot rolling along and many of the twists that occur are hard to predict. Some even may be original. However, he never really lets the film reach a fever pitch.

The Bedroom Window is not without its merits. Although the film's conclusion may be somewhat predictable, its path to that result is quite clever. In the course of the film's two-hour running time a lot happens and the action is both cohesive and complex.

The ingredients for a good recipe are indeed present in *The Bedroom Window*, but for my taste, the finished product still comes out a little bland.