

Entertainment

Wooing captures Shaw adequately

Village Wooing
Nexus Theatre
January 21 to February 14

review by Mike Spindloe

Village Wooing is one of George Bernard Shaw's lesser known plays and certainly not one of his greatest, but because its running time falls somewhere short of an hour, it is the perfect length for the Nexus Theatre's brown-bag lunch-play series. This means that you are actually encouraged to bring your lunch and munch away during the entertainment, presumably chewing with the mouth closed. My companion and I neglected to bring nutritive sustenance, but that didn't matter too much since the play provided us with adequate food for thought.

The characterization and set requirements of the play lend themselves well to a small theatre setting, there being only two characters (of consequence) and one set change to manoeuvre. We were not fortunate enough to witness the set change, having been the victims of a weird scheduling twist which dictates that the play starts at 12:05 on MWF and 11:50 on TR. So, arriving at 11:55, we were required to wait until the end of the first scene, or rather "conversation", to enter.

The play is divided into three conversations, the first occurring on the deck lounge of a luxury cruise ship. "A", played by Blair Haynes, is a man of letters, engaged in writing a travelogue, as is his profession. "Z", played by Lana Skauge, is a young woman who has won a trip around the world and with it the chance to live wildly beyond her means for a few short weeks. She attempts to strike up a conversation with the reticent A, who claims to desire merely to be left alone. At this point in the play, enter your intrepid and punctual (really) critic.

The next two conversations occur in the village shop where Z is employed, and which A happens upon as a customer. There she continues her seemingly unlikely pursuit of A, suffice to say with somewhat more success than she encountered upon the high seas.

Their talk is full of little ironies, the deployment of which make up the bulk of our pleasure in viewing the play. In fact, the ironies extend even to the title, since the wooing doesn't follow any conventional form (quite apart from Z being the aggressor — or have women



photo Keith Zukowski

Blair Haynes and Lana Skauge (above and below left): competent performances but making the play more serious than it really is.

always been the *real* aggressors?). Labelling the scenes as conversations, since very little real conversation actually takes place, serves to further the irony as well.

The performances of Haynes and Skauge are competent, but somehow make the play seem more serious than it really is, or perhaps than Shaw intended it to be in its accustomed role as an opener for a larger work. Perhaps it is because they seem younger (A) and older (Z) than one would imagine from their dialogue. Still, A's dogged determination not to cooperate with Z's nuptial plans does contrast with Z's equally unflappable forthrightness. A informs Z that she ought to keep her cards up her sleeve rather than on the table in plain view, but still allows her to 'win' the

hand, which in this case is literally his.

This brings up an important contradiction in the way the roles are played, which, while being an important device in the context of the plot, is trampled rather than brought out here. Haynes' blustery A seems too unlikely to capitulate to Skauge's often aggressive but inconsistent Z. A is clearly the stronger character in this portrayal, yet he is satisfied with victories of words, while Z manages to score the points that count.

When A finally does capitulate, it is only in a negative way; he wants to derail Z's

illusions of sexual pleasure: "I shall expect more than you have ever dreamt of giving." This statement follows a lengthy, unlikely sounding and, again ironically, truthful speech by A on the nature of sexual relations between man and wife.

Village Wooing is still a somewhat appealing production though, despite the fact that this version doesn't quite seem to capture the essence of the play's moods. It definitely works as cheap lunchtime entertainment and is also being presented on Friday and Saturday evenings. Go to see it with someone you love, or wish you did.



photo Keith Zukowski

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| 1. <i>The Longshoreman</i> — Walk the Plank (Subterranean/US) | 1. <i>Condition</i> — Red Hot and Blue (Amok/CC) |
| 2. <i>Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds</i> — Your Funeral... My Trial (Homestead/Dutch East India) | 2. <i>Live Skull</i> — Pusherman (Homestead/Dutch East India) |
| 3. <i>Ron Paley Big Band</i> — Rocks & Swings (Forsight/Canada/CC) | 3. <i>Young Fresh Fellows</i> — Beer Money (Poplama/US) |
| 4. <i>Wild Seeds</i> — Brave, Clean and Reverent (Jungle/Pollution Control) | 4. <i>Marshmallow Overcoat</i> — Groovy Little Trip (Dionysus/US) |
| 5. <i>David Hykes Harmonic Choir</i> — Harmonic Meetings (Celestial Harmonies/US) | 5. <i>Blue Trapeze</i> — Mask & Marquee (Independent/Pollution Control) |
| 6. <i>Albert Collins</i> — Cold Snap (Alligator/WEA) | 6. <i>Havf Human</i> — Human Eighty-Six (Graven Image/Pollution Control) |
| 7. <i>Various Artists</i> — Dr. Death's Volume One (C'est la mort/US) | 7. <i>Holland/Moore</i> — A Short Cut (Rogue/Celtic) |
| 8. <i>Adrian Below</i> — Desire Caught By the Tail (Island/MCA) | 8. <i>Omnigarage</i> — Modern Pop.../Tape (Independent/CC) |
| 9. <i>The Garbagemen</i> — Take It Away (Craps//CC) | 9. <i>E.J. Brule</i> — Alternative Scat Singer (Transmission/CC) |
| 10. <i>Peter Murphy</i> — Should the World Fail To Fall Apart (Vertigo/Polygram) | 10. <i>No Robate</i> — Dish Pig/Tape (Independent/CC) |