

Burn This explores love triangle

Burn This
Citadel Rice Theatre
through October 23

review by Mark D. Primmer

Burn This is about falling in love — that classic battle which more often than not wages heart against head. Anna (played by Colleen Winton) is an attractive 30 year old dancer who is about to undergo the trauma of readjustment. At a time in her career when she desperately needs the inspiration and encouragement of her dancing partner Robbie, he dies, leaving her alone and frightened.

Offering Anna security is her boyfriend Burton, a successful screenwriter of science-fiction movies. Anna could probably marry Burton and never have to worry about her future again. In fact, her friend and roommate Larry (Jeff Haslam) wants to know why she doesn't "just marry him [Burton] and buy things."

Of course, that might not happen. Stumbling into Anna's loft in the second scene is Pale, the rough and tumble brother of Robbie. Pale, played by David Ferry, is raw and powerful. Unlike the staid Burton, Pale is passionate to an extreme. When Anna asks Pale what he does for a living, Pale leans close to her and with the lustful heat of his breath replies, "I'm a water deliverer. For fires. I put out fires... I'm a roving fireman. Very healthy occupation. I'm puttin' out somebody else's fire, I'm puttin' out my own. Or sometimes you just let it burn."

Later, near the conclusion of the same scene, Pale struggles between sorrow and guilt over his brother's death and the



David Ferry and Colleen Winton fall in love in *Burn This*.

sexual arousal which the scantily clad Anna provides him. Bluntly, Pale exposes the laughable but heartfelt irony of his split feelings: "Aww, man, I'm so ----ed. My gut aches, my balls are hurtin', they're gonna take stitches on my heart. I'm f-----n grievin here and you're giving me a hard on."

Pale exposes himself (no, not that way!) and begins to feel for Anna with overwhelming honesty and passion. As the play continues, Anna must make the decision to either let herself soar in Pale's

passionate embrace, risking pain and all that might follow from loving someone with heart and soul, or continue her relationship with Burton — in reality, a sort of business arrangement whose merits are wealth and security. In one of the greatest lines of the play, Pale attacks Anna for wanting to send him out of her life: "My pants look like a pig's wearin' 'em, I got a hangover here, I'm puttin' on weight, I'm losin' my hair, and you're talkin' like that? I'm not dangerous. You don't think I'm dangerous, you think you're afraid of me is what you think..."

You're afraid you might get interested. Have to feel somethin'."

As Pale, actor David Ferry is incredible. I can't believe that it's an easy job for an actor to imitate a man so beset with passion that in one moment he is shouting with comical rage and in the next moment is lying prostrate, bemoaning with pitiful sorrow the loss of his brother. Ferry gave an entirely convincing and often upsetting portrayal of a man alive with passion. Upsetting? Yes — be warned! The language and subject matter can be offensive.

Jeff Haslam is the play's second highlight. Haslam plays Larry, Anna's gay roommate. If you remember seeing "The Odd Couple" on television years ago, you'll be apt to identify Haslam's character with Felix of that duo. The similarity between Larry and Felix comes from their shared ability to dispel the seriousness of an unpleasant situation with wit and humor. However, there are distinct limits to how far that similarity extends. Can you imagine Felix saying something like this: "Who are you? Where did you come from? What do you want? It's me isn't it? You've always wanted me. You want to have your filthy way with me in the hot desert sun. Ravage me like I've never been ravaged before." Larry does — quoting a line from the movie *Lust in the Dust*.

Lastly, I'd like to report that I had some difficulties in detecting the attraction between actress Colleen Winton and her powerful opposite, David Ferry. In his initial appearance, Pale is aggressive and rude. As such, it's difficult to understand Anna's attraction towards him. Whether it be Winton's failure to communicate a growing feeling of attraction towards Pale, or the playwright's (Landford Wilson) failure to include it in his writing, the fact that Anna and Pale end up having sex with one another at the end of the second scene does not lend itself to easy comprehension or explanation.

BUT, I did enjoy it.

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