



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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RE-WED: THE MARRIAGE OF FLAVIO & ISABELLA

Commedia con Corinna Physical Theatre

Concordia College Drama Studio

Until 8 Mar 2012

Review by Richard Flynn

Commedia dell'Arte has its roots in European comic theatre, which treats of popular stories and legends. It relies on a convention where stock characters – easily recognised by the audience – appear in one reincarnation or another in every story. As such, it is highly stylised, intended to be both funny and didactic all at once and, for most of my experience of it, incredibly predictable and decidedly unfunny, even when it ventures down the innuendo or bawdy paths.

Corinna Di Niro, in her version of "The Marriage of Flavio and Isabella", sets out to challenge such a view – and succeeds handsomely with the help of her two fellow actors, Cinzia Schincariol and James Lainas. All three hardly ever leave the stage, adding or removing a costume element, or donning a number of beautifully crafted masks to indicate quickly what character and types they are playing at the time.

Canada's Cirque du Soleil borrows heavily – and rather too often and too much for me – from commedia dell'Arte, but here there is a simple story given some modern interpolations. This could have been a cheap device to "be contemporary and relevant", but the references and objects suit the production – yes, text messaging is part of the communicatin! – and the actors are sufficiently aware that a good maxim for comedy is 'less is usually more!'

I query, however, if audience participation (of the 'reluctantly-appears-on-stage-with-the-actors' kind) is effective for this play, even though it is a feature of most commedia dell'Arte plays.

For sheer energy and an unexpectedly high level of entertainment, this production, in the beautifully appointed Concordia College Drama Studio, will be the envy of hundreds of other Fringe events, obliged to play in little more than humpies through the shameful neglect by government, business and well-to-do private citizens to help provide little, say 300-seat, theatres such as many schools now take for granted.

Perhaps there's a marketing opportunity for other schools around the State.

Rating: 4 stars (out of 5)