

STAGE



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Theatre Review (LA): *Peace in Our Time* by Noel Coward, Adapted by Barry Creyton

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Noel Coward was one of the most significant artists of the 20th century, a playwright, director, actor, songwriter, and singer. He wrote more than 50 plays, most notably *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Present Laughter*, and *Design For Living*. Coward was noted for his wit, his flamboyance, and what *Time* called “a sense of personal style, a combination of cheek and chic, and pose and poise.” What is not so well known is that Coward was a devoted, almost fanatic defender of all things British.

During World War II he was chosen by Churchill to entertain the troops and he wrote many songs like “Don’t Let’s be Beastly to the Germans” and “London Pride.” He also won an Academy Award for the Naval drama *In Which We Serve*. He was in the Nazi black books naming those to be put to death, and worked for British intelligence in postwar Paris. His experiences led him, after the war, to write *Peace in our Time*, about what life in Britain would have been like if the Germans had won the Battle of Britain and the subsequent peace.

Though *Peace in Our Time* was only a moderate success, perhaps because nobody wanted to think about the war let alone the possibility of a Nazi victory. Today, however, the play has resonance and power to move an audience. In these times when the government is disdained, it is a powerful reminder that we take freedom for granted. The play takes place in a pub, the *Shy Gazelle*, where we meet a diverse cast of characters, each affected in his or her own way by the German presence. Adapter Creyton has taken the liberty to cut some 45 minutes, add a piano player, and interject nine of Coward’s lesser songs. Personally I loved this conceit because it gives the British buoyancy despite their situation.

Antaeus Company, the foremost classical group in the city, has double-cast the play with a roster of extremely talented actors such as Josh Clark, Rebecca Mozo, Amelia White, Kendra Chell, Emily

Chase, Rob Nagle, Patrick Wenk-Wolff, Melinda Peterson, J. D. Cullum, Bill Brochtrup, Graham Hamilton, and Lily Knight, to name but a few. Tom Buderwitz has designed an authentic pub where one wants to go on stage and order a drink. Casey Stangl took on the herculean task of directing each cast of 23 actors, with brilliant results.

Peace in Our Time is one of the best productions to come out of this super-talented ensemble. It will play at the [Deaf West Theatre](#) until Dec 11. Catch this one!



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ROBERT MACHRAY has appeared in over 150 plays and has worked at 14 Tony Award-winning theatres. He has been nominated for and won numerous awards. Robert has a B.A. from Yale and an M.F.A. from USC. He has taught at USC, UCLA, UCSB, and Pasadena City College. ...