



Los Angeles

BWW Review: Rob Nagle's A Tour De Force in Stunning THE JUDAS KISS

by Gil Kaan Mar. 5, 2019



Rob Nagle & Colin Bates
Photo by Jenny Graham

THE JUDAS KISS/by **David Hare**/directed by **Michael Michetti**/Boston Court Pasadena/thru March 24, 2019

Boston Court Pasadena's artistic director **Michael Michetti** assuredly directs his pitch-perfect cast in DEEE-livering the whip-smart words of **David Hare**'s **THE JUDAS KISS** in a smooth, non-stop, totally involving pace. Hare takes two defining incidents in infamous playwright **Oscar Wilde**'s life (the time

leading to Wilde's arrest for gross indecency, and the aftermath of his two-year prison sentence), and tries to make sense of the troubling situations.

Chameleon **Rob Nagle** has once again transformed himself into another fully-fleshed out characterization (**CHURCH & STATE**'s Charlie Whitmore, **IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE**'s Freddie Filmore, **THE LITTLE FOXES**' Oscar Hubbard, to name a few past roles). Nagle's **Oscar Wilde**, as expected, spouts endless bon mots of wisdom and insight. What's pleasantly surprising (besides Nagle's nimble command of the word-heavy monologues/dialogues of Oscar) is Nagle's fresh interpretation of Oscar as a person with much warmth, deep humanity and internal strength. Nagle **COMMANDS** the stage every second he's on it. Bravo, Mr. Nagle!

Strong, solid support from **Colin Bates** as Oscar's lover Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas and **Darius De La Cruz** as Oscar's long-time friend Robert "Robbie" Ross. Bates effortlessly embodies Bosie as the entitled, questionably conniving, yet naive, upper-class malcontent rebelling from his disapproving parents; while De La Cruz authentically inhabits Robbie as the practical and steadfast devotee to Oscar's every whim and wants.

Set designer **Se Hyun Oh** (with his proficient, sparing use of furniture pieces, and multi-use doors on both stages left and right) has created a spacious hotel suite for the first act and a Naples villa in the second.



Darius De La Cruz & Colin Bates
Photo by Jenny Graham

In the first act, the charismatic actors portraying the most efficient staff of the Cadogan Hotel go through their respective duties in exacting detail - attending to the cleaning up of Oscar's suite's disarray, the chafing dish serving of an elaborate lobster and dauphinoise potatoes dinner, the making of the guest bed post-extracurricular activities.

THE JUDAS KISS opens on the naked sexual gymnastics of room service attendant



Arthur (a very personable Matthew Campbell Dowling) and maid Phoebe (a delightful Mara Klein), when interrupted by their superior Moffatt (a take-charge Will Dixon). Later, Kurt Kanazawa makes his second act scene as Bosie's latest conquest Galileo most memorable in his birthday suit and his few vocal responses, tossed off solely in Italian.

Costumer Dianne K. Graebner does wonders with the 1890's period costuming of the hotel staffers and the principals; as does wig designer Shannon Hutchins for Nagle's headpiece for Oscar.

Lighting designer David Hernandez makes striking use of candle-lit, low-lighting. One second-act scene between Oscar and Bosie, lit solely by a few candles, causes you to lean forward in your seat into the intimacy of their almost-secretive conversation. Incredibly, successful effect!

Look for Hare's title to pop up in your mind at various key moments of Oscar's actions. It will give you pause for thought (*especially* when Oscar references John and Judas in a single sentence!).



What a great start of Boston Court Pasadena's 2019 season!

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