

Theatre Review: "The Judas Kiss" at Boston Court Pasadena

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By Carol Edger Germain

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The Judas Kiss at Boston Court Pasadena

First, I will confess that I was not aware of the history of Oscar Wilde's persecution (and prosecution) in the late 1800's because of his bisexuality.

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In the spring of 1895 he was the toast of London, enjoying the fruits of his successful play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," and also enjoying the semi-underground gay scene although he was married and had children. However, when the aristocratic family of his semi-secret gay lover, Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas, attacked him verbally and publicly, accusing him of the crime of sodomy, Wilde unwisely proceeded with a libel suit, and not only was he unsuccessful (inasmuch as the supposedly libelous statements were true), but he wound up spending time in prison for "gross indecency." Interestingly, the play written by Wilde in 1890, "The Picture of Dorian Gray," was written just a year before he met Bosie, and describes a beautiful younger man who

destroys the life of an older artist. Also interesting is the fact that Colin Bates played Dorian Gray in the recent production at A Noise Within in Pasadena and now plays Bosie in this production.

“The Judas Kiss,” written by David Hare and directed by Michael Michetti, stars Rob Nagle (Oscar Wilde), Colin Bates (Lord Alfred “Bosie” Douglas), Darius de la Cruz (Robert Ross), Will Dixon (Sandy Moffatt), Matthew Campbell Dowling (Arthur Wellesley), Mara Klein (Phoebe Cane), and Kurt Kanazawa (Galileo Masconi).

The play opens with Wilde frantically and eloquently mulling over the decision of whether to stay and face prosecution or flee. Bosie, who seems to be more focused on sticking it to his father than protecting Wilde, urges him stay and go to trial, while Robert, usually on the sidelines solely focused on the well-being of Wilde, urges him to run. Wilde’s devotion to Bosie results in his decision to stay, he is rewarded with prison time. Bosie vows to remain loyal and to take care of Wilde when he is released, because this unfortunate downfall has destroyed his reputation and his income in London.

The second act opens with Bosie and Wilde in their hideaway, down to literally their last dime. Bosie has never understood the concepts of “work” or “self-sufficiency,” and is reaching a cross-roads where he must either learn to live a productive life or retreat to his wealthy family, begging forgiveness, with his “tail between his legs” so to speak. Meanwhile, he practices his well-honed trade of partying and seducing young men, bringing them to the home he shares with Wilde. Wilde remains himself as well, showing the depth of his intellect, emotion, and wit. The play is almost entirely dialogue, and the entire cast does their job well, but when Wilde speaks it’s eloquent, thought-provoking, riveting. Based on the title, you know there’s an ultimate betrayal in some form, and the final minutes of the play are even more compelling and heart-breaking than already experienced in the play so far.



(L-R) Rob Nagle and Colin Bates in "The Judas Kiss" at Boston Court Pasadena

My only suggestion to strengthen the play's ability to keep you hanging on every word, which is already significant, is that the first act could be significantly shortened, there is a bit much time spent on discussing the dilemma, with no new information or twists being added. If you see the play with someone who isn't aware of the history, I also suggest you give them the facts, or make sure they read the one-page synopsis in the program before the play starts.

The Judas Kiss

- Written by David Hare
- Directed by Michael Michetti
- Creative Team:
 - Scenic Designer: Se Hyun Oh
 - Costume Designer: Dianne K. Graebner
 - Lighting Designer: David Hernandez
 - Composer & Sound Designer: Peter Bayne
 - Props Designer: Courtney Lynn Dusenberry
 - Wig Designer: Shannon Hutchins
 - Accent Coach: Nike Doukas
 - Casting Director: Victoria Hoffman
 - Production Stage Manager: Karen Osborne

• Cast:

Rob Nagle, Colin Bates, Darius De La Cruz, Will Dixon, Matthew Campbell Dowling, Kurt Kanazawa, and Mara Klein.

Boston Court Pasadena

70 N Mentor Ave., Pasadena, CA 91106

(Parking lot behind the theater)

- Thurs-Sat 8 pm – 3/7,8,9,14,15,16,21,22,23
 - Sun 2 pm – 3/10,17,24
 - General admission: \$20 – \$39.
- Purchase tickets [here](#).
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