

The 99-Seat Beat

By F. KATHLEEN FOLEY FEB 15, 2019 | 6:00 AM

At Boston Court you can see a reexamination of Oscar Wilde's fall from grace....

Boston Court's 'The Judas Kiss'

The essentials: After losing his first trial for criminal libel, Oscar Wilde faces imminent arrest unless he flees the country, as everyone urges him to do. Everyone, that is, except his young lover, Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas, who exhorts Wilde to fight to clear both their names — disastrous advice Wilde heeds. Act 2 commences in Italy, after Wilde has just been released from two years of hard labor. There, broken and destitute, he faces a final indignity — and a final betrayal.

Why this? David Hare is an incisive social critic whose works expose systemic inequities through psychologically complex characters. In "Kiss," Wilde seems deceptively passive, mired in inaction and indecision. Yet Hare's play is essentially a star-crossed love story, with Wilde as the ill-fated hero whose tragic flaw is his enduring ardor for the feckless Bosie. Director Michael Michetti and star Rob Nagle are seasoned veterans well equipped to unearth the emotional intricacies underlying Wilde's brittle public persona.

Details: Boston Court Pasadena, 70 N. Mentor Ave., Pasadena. 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays; ends March 24. Additional performances 2 p.m. March 2 and 8 p.m. March 18. \$20-\$39 (\$5 on March 2). (626) 683-6801, bostoncourtpasadena.org

The 99-Seat Beat appears every Friday. Our reviewers shortlist offerings with an emphasis on smaller venues. Some recommendations are shows we've seen; others are based on the track record of the company, playwright, director or cast.