

## Great storytelling, nuances delights audience

Kat Michels | Fri, Nov 01 2013 11:51 AM



Behind the Curtain, Kat Michels

A good memory is the keystone of the master liar, or if that is lacking the ability to spin an even greater tale will also do the trick. Dorante is a pathological liar, but he has a horrible memory. So when he arrives in Paris and starts weaving his stories he has to rely on his charm and quick wit to waylay his father's good intentions, survive a dual and get the girl: All the while trying to stay ahead of his ever expanding fantastic web of lies.

Antaeus' production of "The Liar" is absurdly ridiculous, clever and charming to boot. David Ives' adaptation of Pierre Corneille's French romp is magnificent. Ives script is witty, with just enough modern tidbits thrown in to make it feel fresh.

Written entirely in rhyming couplets, the rhymes themselves add to the comedy coupling words like "idjit" and "midget," and where there is no rhyme available mispronouncing words to make them fit the scheme. On such occasions the fourth wall is broken by an apologetic glance to the audience from the actor uttering the

bastardized rhyme. Ives also sprinkles in a smattering of Shakespeare paying homage to "Hamlet," "Two Gentleman of Verona," and "Comedy of Errors." At first the look of the show seems at odds with the style of the text, but as the story progresses the oddness fades and it feels perfectly natural amongst the outlandish story. The set design by Keith Mitchell and costume design by Angela Balogh Calin are, for lack of a better descriptor, steampunk light – all of the look, but none of the gadgets. The costumes, in monochromatic black, are comprised of corsets, boots, trench coats and a smattering of period(esque) pieces. The set is industrial metallic and lit beautifully, by Francois-Pierre Couture, providing the only splashes of color present. Director, Casey Stangl, uses the levels and nooks and crannies provided by Mitchell beautifully. Stangl's cast\* is great, handling the twists and turns of this script with ease. Nicholas D'Agosto is fabulous as Dorante. The reckless abandon with which he flings himself into the lies that he tells makes it hard to remember that he is completely full of it, and despite the tall tales that he strings everybody along with, you can't help but like him. Robert Pine as Geronte, Dorante's father, and Brian Slaten as Cliton, Dorante's servant who is incapable of telling a lie, are adorable in their naiveté. Bo Foxworth's Alcippe is hugely over the top, but with his total commitment it works wonderfully. At the opposite end is Johanna Strapp's reserved Lucrece whose sincerity will tug at your heart strings. "The Liar" is a saucy romp through Paris at the hands of an exquisite storyteller. This is one of those productions that you can go back and see again, because you're sure to pick up additional nuances with each viewing \*Antaeus Company practices partner casting, with two actors cast in every role, so the cast may differ on your night of attendance from the actors mentioned in this review. "The Liar" The Antaeus Company Through December 1st Tickets: [www.antaeus.org](http://www.antaeus.org) or 818-506-5436 Kat Michels is a two-time regional Emmy award-winning writer with an AAS in video production and a BFA in theatre.