



BWW Review: Antaeus' Sly & Wicked LITTLE FOXES Slay!

by Gil Kaan Oct. 27, 2018



THE LITTLE FOXES/by Lillian Hellman/directed by Cameron Watson/Kiki & David Gindler Performing Arts Center/thru December 10, 2018

Lillian Hellman's **THE LITTLE FOXES** receives a stunning, STUNNING mounting by the always dependable Antaeus Theatre Company. Helmed with much precision by director Cameron Watson, the two-and-a-half-hour, two-intermission, three-act simply whizzes by,

packed with Hellman's wonderful words coming out of the most capable troupe of actors, all.

Entering the stage, audience eyes feast on scenic designer John Iacovelli's meticulously-detailed set of a turn-of-the-century living room. Only after the show begins with the full stage lights up, do we see the foyer and dining room sets hidden in full view on both ends of the stage. Stairs also lead upstairs to bedrooms of unseen, but easily overheard arguing and ominous thuds on the floor.



For those unfamiliar with this Hellman classic, **THE LITTLE FOXES** focuses on the close-knit, grown-up Hubbard siblings, Regina, Ben and Oscar, set in 1900 Alabama. The relationships and disagreements of these three, along with the accompanying spouses and children, must have been a strong blueprint for today's soap operas. But, with all the previous productions of **THE LITTLE FOXES** that I've experienced, I don't remember chuckling so often during this period drama. Deborah Puette owns her portrayal of Regina Hubbard Giddens. Puette mines all the laughs out of the simplest lines with her razor-sharp delivery. Another scene of comic gold involved the conspiratory double-talking of the commanding Rob Nagle as the ambitious Oscar Hubbard, the congenial Mike McShane as the take charge Ben Hubbard, and the purposely oblivious Calvin Picou as the dimwitted Leo, Oscar's son.



High
drama



periodically interrupts the cordial intimacy of the siblings, as whenever Regina disagrees with her brothers, or when Oscar often rudely dismisses his wife Birdie's naïve actions. **Jocelyn Towne** immediately grabs centerstage each time she flitters and fusses as Birdie. Towne imbues her Birdie with a hyper-energetic desire to make people happy, dosed with the realization that she's never going to be happy herself. Towne's tragic breakdown in the third act's simply heart-wrenching. Brava, Ms. Towne!

The dramatic level rises with the return of Regina's husband Horace, who's been away from the Giddens/Hubbards daily goings-on for five months. John DeMita instills his



Horace with humanity and much strength despite his rapidly declining health, requiring use of a wheelchair and timed doses of medicine to avert the inevitable. The kid gloves everyone handles Horace with, ultimately comes off with Regina's most explosive confrontation/ultimatum with him.

Kristin Couture wondrously essays Regina and Horace's teenage daughter Alexandra, an innocent protected from

the realities of grown-up life in the South. A true Daddy's girl, Alexandra lovingly waits on her father literally hand and foot, until she doesn't have to. Couture's third-act transformation from teenage innocence to spirited, all-knowing young woman with the newly-acquired upper hand is so deliciously satisfying to watch.

Judy Louise Johnson and William L. Warren limn their roles as the Giddens' house slaves, Addie and Cal, respectively, with dignity and feisty personalities. They both definitely know their places, but so deeply ensconced in the Giddens household, they frequently speak their truthful minds.

Timothy Adam Venable makes his presence known in his brief role as William Marshall, the northern businessman the Hubbards desperately want to partner with.



Antaeus' technical team outdo themselves with **LITTLE FOXES**, if that's even possible. Aside from the aforementioned scenic designs from Iacovelli, costume designer Terri A. Lewis bulls-eyes with her 1900s costumes - so gorgeous on the women, handsome on the men and appropriate on the servants. Sound designer **Jeff Gardner**'s muffled upstairs bedroom sound effects, muted dinner small talk in the dining room, and subtle outside rain din add nice complementary touches. Lighting designer **Jared A. Sayeg** artfully lights the side sets of Giddens' foyer and dining room whenever focus needed to be drawn there.

For the fastest, entertaining three-acts you'll ever sit through, snare **THE LITTLE FOXES** at Antaeus. That's a catch you'll be boasting about.