

now playing



**February 20, 2018:**

The Hothouse reviewed by Rob Stevens



Peter Van Norden and Graham Hamilton (all photos by Geoffrey Wade Photography)

Harold Pinter wrote *The Hothouse* in 1958 but put it away until 1980 when he dusted it off and it was given its first production. The essences of the later and greater Pinter plays are here, they just are not as sharply refined. Antaeus Theatre Company in Glendale is giving the play a rare production and if you are a Pinter person, you definitely should see it. If you admire strong acting companies, you should see it. If you ever thought of committing yourself or a loved one to a mental institution, you should see it. For truly, the lunatics have taken over the asylum except here they are the ones already in charge. They are just crazier and more bent than their charges, whom we never see and are referred to only as numbers.



Jocelyn Towne and Peter Van Norden

It's Christmas Day but it seems it is no holiday for the staff. Roote (a blustering Peter Van Norden) is the titular man in charge of the facility but he doesn't seem too sharp or tuned into the goings on. His assistant Gibbs (a slick and polished Graham Hamilton) is a very smooth operator and has his finger on the pulse of the institution and is fiendishly grasping for total control. The two of them share Miss Cutts (Jocelyn Towne as the usual icy Pinter seductress) as both secretary and mistress. The main occupation of Lush (a finely tuned comic performance by Rob Nagle) seems to be imbibing Roote's liquor as the two get sloshingly drunk. The meek little staffer Lamb (JD Cullum) seems to be the only conscientious employee and he soon ends up being tortured and straight-jacketed by Gibbs and Cutts. The madness escalates to a bloody massacre off stage and a change in command.



JD Cullum and Graham Hamilton

Director Nike Doukas has guided her talented cast into finding their inner madmen and demons and letting their freak flag fly. It is a very dark and disturbing comedy and a rare bit of theatrical history to see this early and seldom produced piece of Pinter. *The Hothouse* turns out to be a true madhouse.



Kiki & David Gindler Performing Arts Center, 110 E. Broadway in Glendale. Ends March 11. [www.antaeus.org](http://www.antaeus.org)