

ON STAGE LOS ANGELES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2018

HOT! PINTER AT ANTAEUS



JD Cullum, Paul Eiding, Jocelyn Towne,
Rob Nagle, Peter Van Norden,
John Apicella, Graham Hamilton

Photo by Geoffrey Wade Photography

When the wonderful local theatre company, A Noise Within, was essentially escorted out of Glendale, it took a couple of years for another wonderful company to come to town, to Broadway, no less, to bring professional productions to our fair City. Having been a fan of Antaeus Theatre Company, a company of professional actors, and directors and designers for many years, enjoying their work in North Hollywood, it was exciting to see Glendale City luminaries attend the ‘ground breaking’ at the former electronics store just up the street from Brand to continue the Antaeus tradition of reviving ‘classic’ theatre. Embracing both ancient and relatively current dramatic literature, the appeal to those seeking to be enlightened and those just ready to be entertained is blossoming here. What I’ve discovered, though having known it all along, is that when a community embraces an

an established theatre company, as Glendale did for years with *A Noise Within*, and is now beginning to embrace *Antaeus*, something happens. There is a deeper feeling than just spending an evening to see a play.

We realize that this performance is happening before our very eyes. It's Living Theatre and no two performances are alike. *Antaeus* embraces the tradition of double casting. The Hothouse currently up and running, presents two separate casts: *The Ducks* and *The Pelicans*. (See the show and these references will be clear!) They do this for good reason. Company members are working professionals. Most actors are members of Actors Equity and earn a living not only from their work on the stage but in television and feature films. Company members: representatives of *Deep Space Nine* and *The Big Bang Theory* were in attendance and other recognizable folks are supporting members of the company.

Our *Antaeus* actors are professional. This preamble is to point up that when you go to see Harold Pinter's *The Hothouse*, and I highly recommend that you do so... or any of the other productions scheduled for this season at *Antaeus*, you will find yourself in the company of well trained professionals who love living theatre.. both in the audience and on the stage. (Not sure that the audience is well trained, but you get the picture.) The classics are presented to keep the company sharp and steeped in the long tradition of dramatic literature.

Pinter is particularly challenging because his biting British satire rides sharply on the ears. Literally, in this production. The crack of hard soles and heels on the stage underscore the sharp edges of the institution, the hothouse, where the 'patients' are known only by their numbers. Why? Because that's the way we do it. That's the way it's always been done.

Director Nike Doukas's "Ducks" cast finds a comfortable and realistic ground of British accents. The play's crisp pace has an undertaste of cruelty, which may be the whole point. Roote (Peter Van Norden) is the doughty director of the .. what shall we call it.. asylum? The Home? He rails and is confused. Subtly, Gibbs (Graham Hamilton) has his eye on things, mostly clever self-preservation.

Cutts (blonde, pert and pointy Joycelyn Towne) enjoys time with almost anyone who can keep her 'satisfied.' The ambiguity of who's who as the story unfolds introduces us to Lamb (hapless JD Cullum) and Lush (bombastic Rob Nagle). Moving us through a mystery of whom the father of a baby boy born to an inmate might be, as well as the death of 6457: another confusing and unhappy chapter in a day at The Hothouse. It's Christmas, for Christ's sake!

Rambling on, it's clear that mismanagement, alcohol and just plain incompetence must all build to a raucus climax: introducing us to the conclusion with Gibbs and John Apicella (Lobb) on board to continue the status quo. Paul Eiding's (Tubb) delivery of a Christmas Cake is testament to how even brief parts are enlivened by fine actors.

Kudos to tech and Julie Keen's period costumes to a fine point!