

LAST DAYS “The Judas Kiss” at Boston Court

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Rob Nagle (left) as Oscar Wilde and Colin Bates (right) as Lord Alfred 'Bosie' Douglas. Photo by Jenny Graham / Boston Court Pasadena.

Eye-candy and a powerhouse performance. Rob Nagle shines as Oscar Wilde within a solid ensemble at Boston Court

Pasadena. For *The Judas Kiss*, British playwright Sir David Hare delves into the lead up and fallout of Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde's scandal and disgrace at the hands of his young lover Lord Alfred Douglas, aka "Bosie," in London, circa 1895.

After writing in different forms throughout the 1880s, Wilde became one of London's most popular playwrights in the early 1890s. Hare's play charts the circumstances of Wilde's criminal conviction for homosexuality, and his imprisonment, while pointing towards his early death at age 46.

Hare balances his portrayal of the three central historical figures of Oscar Wilde, Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas (Colin Bates) and Robert "Robbie" Ross (Darius De La Cruz) with the addition of fictitious characters:

There's Sandy Moffatt (Will Dixon), a hotel manager who is implied to be a homosexual; Arthur Wellesley (Matthew Campbell Dowling), a member of the hotel staff; Phoebe Cane (Mara Klein), a recently hired maid and love interest of Arthur Wellesley; and Galileo Masconi (gorgeously played by a yawning, smiling Kurt Kanazawa), an Italian fisherman with whom Bosie has an affair in Act Two.

Act One opens in dim light to a sensual scene of lovemaking between two young and lithe bodies. It's soon revealed to be a tryst between two of the hotel staff, Phoebe and Arthur, in the hotel guest's bed. Eventually Wilde arrives, bringing with him a whirlwind of scandal, trauma and exasperation.

Oscar Wilde's spoiled and reckless young lover Bosie has succeeded in instigating Wilde to sue Bosie's aristocratic father in court for insulting him as a "sodomite." The loss of the suit opens the way for Wilde being criminally indicted for gross indecency. Wilde has tacit government permission to flee the country to avoid arrest, trial, and imprisonment, but the irresponsible Bosie insists that he stay and defend their honor.

Nagle's performance as the larger-than-life poet and playwright is riveting. In portraying the depths of this romantic individualist and tragic victim, Nagle navigates a dizzying symphony of emotions and decisions, never losing his scintillating wit. Hare's text is full of lines that make you snort with laughter or laugh outright, yet Nagle never lets you forget the heartbreaking drama that simmers beneath his ripostes.

Act Two is set in Italy, two years after Wilde's two-year incarceration, where he has reunited with the unbelievably selfish Bosie. Now a broken man, Wilde is holed up in exile from the UK in a rat-infested hotel in Naples.

A fellow actor, Justin Okin, remarked on Rob Nagle's performance by observing, "You invite and allow the audience to see you (and thus Wilde) from every angle. Rather than wrapping the character around you, you strip yourself and show us Wilde inside of you. It is a profound lesson in the simplicity of great acting." Indeed, it is. The breadth and depth of Nagle's towering and sensitive performance is astonishing.

Direction and staging by Artistic Director Michael Michetti is faultless. Costumes by Dianne K, Graebner and scenic design by Se Hyun Oh perfectly reproduce the period style. *The Judas Kiss* is a superb play and cast; only a few performances remain.



Rob Nagle (right) as Oscar Wilde and Colin Bates (left) as Lord Alfred 'Bosie' Douglas. Photo by Jenny Graham / Boston Court Pasadena.

The Judas Kiss

Written by **David Hare**

Directed by **Michael Michetti**

February 15 – March 24, 2019

Performances:

Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00pm; Sundays at 2:00pm.

Running Time:

2 hours 40 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

Tickets and Information:

Boston Court Pasadena

70 N Mentor Ave. Pasadena, CA 91106

Website: BostonCourtPasadena.org

Phone: 626.683.6801

Prices: \$20 – \$39.00