

## ON STAGE LOS ANGELES

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2013

### LIES, LIES, LIES: A440!

Pierre Corneille's *The Liar* "slapdapted" by David Ives

Thanks to Melinda Peterson, I learned that Antaeus was a Titan, not a God, who always kept one foot on the ground. As long as one foot was on the ground, he was immortal. He lost immortality if he allowed himself to go airborne. Antaeus Theatre Company has both feet planted firmly on the ground and if their current productions of **The Liar** are any indication, they must continue to flourish.

I had a musician friend whose vanity license plate, "A440," referred to perfect pitch. Approaching perfection is a goal. To achieve it is rare, but one thing that I've seen over the years with Antaeus Theatre Company is that their choices of material and dedication to the heart of theatre continue to strive for perfection. Their current offering, **The Liar**, written by David Ives is adapted from Pierre Corneille's 1644 adaptation of Spanish-American playwright, [Juan Ruíz de Alarcón](#)'s *La Verdad Sospechosa* which was published in 1634. Ives' "translaptation": a rhyming adaptation in iambic pentameter, is a gem. He has even been so bold as to hippity hop almost four hundred years with contemporary references in clever dialogue which director Casey Stangl has instilled in her actors to romp with. Yes. It's a romp.



Nicholas D'Agosto as Dorante, Bo Foxworth as Alcippe  
Photo by Geoffrey Wade

The beauty of this first performance (a second cast follows with Antaeus's tradition of doing a complete double casting) is that the language, the attitude and the style all meld to perfect pitch and rhythms. It's not easy to keep a beat, but the beat goes on starting with the familiar preshow admonition to turn off electronic

devices and such when the house lights go down and a spot comes up inhabited by Cliton (brilliant Rob Nagle) who cannot tell a lie. He is not a simpleton, but a pretty basic guy who starts the show with a little exposition that leads us down the garden path to lies and more lies and mistaken identities and ... what else? A happy ending.

The Liar, himself, Dorante (gaining traction with every step, Nicholas D'Agosto), arrives in the Tuilleries ready for action. He soon enlists Cliton to be his wingman as in come hotsy totsy Clarice (dark and slightly S and M Jules Willcox) and not so hotsy in her hornrims, Lucrece (really very attractive Joanna Straap). Playing twins, warm and cuddly Isabelle and not so cuddly Sabine (Gigi Bermingham), all add to the mixup as Dorante thinks he's fallen for Clarice, but remembers Lucrece's name!

It gets better. Alcippe (rabid Bo Foxworth) and his pal, Philiste (staid Jonathon Lamer) keep the ball in the air as we finally meet Dorante's daddy, Geronte (flip shades Peter Van Norden), whose goal is to marry off his son. Oh frabjous day!

Rhymes and pacing never flag, which is all thanks to Stangl's fluid and dramatic direction. Lines fly fast and furious with never a syllable lost. Minimal set by Keith Mitchell functions perfectly. Costumes: black on black on black (with a little lace: black) by Angela Balogh Calin are just right. This is professional theatre in a storefront that matches or outweighs most anything I've ever seen. These are *theatre* folks dedicated to the stage. Of course, many of the Anteaus members work regularly in features or on TV, but the camaraderie of the company is totally dedicated to the ensemble, which, of course is pitch perfect when everyone is so enjoying the process of creating the gift of a great performance. A440!