

Fast-paced farce a perfect choice for the holiday season

By: Bryan Rivers

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The Cercle Molière's *Boeing Boeing*, which opened Friday night, is a zany, engaging and fast-paced comedy; a perfect choice for the holiday season. Camoletti's comic classic is listed in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the most produced French play in the world, and it is easy to see why. It has romance, satire, the battle of the sexes, a classic farce structure, and a head-spinning plot which leaves the audience exhausted.

The comic action is set in motion by Bernard, a self-proclaimed maestro of love, who is simultaneously engaged to three beautiful flight attendants, Janet, Jacqueline, and Judith, with different schedules which never overlap. He is reluctantly helped in his deceptions by Berthe, his long-suffering, disapproving maid and surrogate mother, who covers for him. Bernard is very organized and even has a romantic cottage as a backup in case two fiancées should be in town unexpectedly.

Inevitably, complications arise. An old friend, Robert, arrives looking for a place to stay; schedules change; two, then three fiancées arrive simultaneously. Kim Griffin's set design of Bernard's apartment, with foyer, three bedrooms, a bathroom and kitchen efficiently facilitates much slamming of doors and the narrow escapes associated with farce.

As the tempo accelerates, Bernard becomes a nervous wreck. He is ultimately exposed as a fraud but, at the close, some unexpected events also take us by surprise.

The casting of this production is very well balanced, and the stage chemistry is good. Each character is presented in a way that borders on caricature and exaggeration, and yet retains enough individuality to be credible. The relationship between Bernard (Gabriel Gosselin) and Robert (Patrick Trudel) naturally evolves from expert and admiring apprentice to co-conspirators to rivals. Gosselin transitions from suave, confident womanizer to desperate liar with facility.

Laura Lussier, as Janet, a brash, opinionated and totally confident Texan, is a major focus of comic energy. Her frenetic mixing of French and English adds to her flamboyant, exotic appeal. Nadine Pinette, as Jacqueline, is a good comic foil. She is shrewd, intuitively suspicious, but unable to pinpoint exactly what is wrong. She is determined to have her own way and firmly stands her ground. Alicia Johnston, as Judith, the Icelandic blond, completes the trio of fiancées. Johnston plays Judith as a sexually liberated feminist trying to control her strong libido. Her excited body language and somewhat extravagant view of relationships also add an energetic stage presence to the cast. Micheline Girardin, as Berthe, provides a balancing performance as the usually calm, efficient, loyal family domestic who totally disapproves of the chaotic situation which she is supposed to manage. She represents a different model of female comportment and decorum.

Robert and Berthe become increasingly pulled into Bernard's manic attempts to avoid exposure to the extent that they form a spontaneous alliance of lies and improvisation. Overall, this production is a good-natured, light-hearted romp which is entertaining and well executed.

Cercle Molière

Boeing Boeing

By Marc Camoletti

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4 stars

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