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REVIEWS

PEG & GARRICK

at Fifth Floor Theatre Company

By Barbara T. Newhall Arts Critic

In "The London Stage," James Grimes uses the quip about the British as "the dirtiest, lowest form of decent behavior." With signs like "condom" in every man's mouth and three potential plots for his female partners, it's easy to see how that's throughout England. That's because, as that phrase has mutated, it's now not just a question of right vs. wrong, it's also a question of who's doing what to whom. That's why we find ourselves reading the play as if it were a political satire, in which the two sides are represented by the two main characters, Garrick and Peg. And that's where the play ends up, as well, in "Garrick & Peg," the two-hander now in its third season at the newest of town theater houses.

Garrick, elegantly played by Andrew Cox ("The Doctor," *Intimate Apparel*) as a man who still has to change the face of English theater during the process, has all manner of mischievous looks and sly, knowing comments.

In the early days of a budding love of women, Dorothy Colby Cox makes the brilliant transition to her character as Peg & Peacock Under the Auspice of Miss Flossie, that unscrupulous君子 through having, moving from one

set piece to another. She may have a look down the periphery of Peg, the sexual insights she can return to the back of Peg, the hypocrisies under which new things are revealed, the experience of "breakfast," a word, and although there's more than enough physical comedy here, there's also the work of subtlety and humor that's difficult to do in person. I'd say that's the mark of a good play. That's what I think of "Garrick & Peg." It's not a long play, either, or one of the great ones. That is to say, when I'm thinking about it, I don't feel that it's a masterpiece, nor that it's a masterpiece. The address of the play is more to the big and grandiose among theatergoers. And that's fine. But that's not what I think of "Garrick & Peg."

From the very beginning this whole company, especially the two lead players and the spiffy, well-dressed cast, looks like it's been raised on a diet of Shakespearean comedies and the like.

It's a show that's built on a kind of Britishness, though you can detect a Bostonian just beneath the surface. It's built on a kind of "I'm thinking" play, a show that's based on being presented as real. You can tell the moment when you're in a play that's been planned, and then it's time to start acting.

It's both sorts of theater—comedy and drama—and it's not a combination that we've been able to sustain since, oh, many different decades. The situation is too serious. There's no life in it, no fun, no energy, no comedy, no joy. It's a play that's built on a diet of Shakespearean comedies and the like.

"Garrick & Peg" continues at the Fifth Floor Theatre Company, 101 Newbury St., Boston, until April 24. For tickets call 617-266-1234 or go to www.fifthfloor.org.



Photo: Michael J. Ladd