

Public Theatre Opens Season with Victorian Spoof

Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold

Maine | Oct 14, 2024

DRACULA: A COMEDY OF TERRORS Delights with Sheer Silliness

Lewiston's Public Theatre opens its 34th season to a full house, convulsed in laughter at the Victorian spoof, **DRACULA: A COMEDY OF TERRORS**. The 2023 Off-Broadway comedy by Steve Rosen and Gordon Greenberg is a sendup of Bram Stoker's Gothic novel Dracula, but in this delightful comic concoction, horror is replaced with frothy fun and sheer silliness.



Left to Right: Mark S. Cartier, Kevin Cristaldi, Luke Sholl, Ian Gould, Jessica DiGiovanni

The five-character parody relies on a combination of comic devices, among them revolving door farce, anachronistic wise-cracking, repeated gags and physical comedy, gender swapping, cleverly risqué repartee.

Janet Mitchko directs with a well-calibrated sense of timing, inventive use of five actors playing multiple roles, and repeated stage business that gains in humorous impact by its cumulative effect.

Michael Reidy's set design (Duck Bracey, Props) consists of a gloomy foreboding, neutral gray unit set that works well for numerous locales and provides the excellent canvas for Matthew Brian Cost's lighting design, which parodies the frightening effects of the horror genre, with lurid red washes, startling bolts of light followed by sudden darkness. Charles Coes' sound design adds to the overall effect with aptly chosen, melodramatic music and spooky special effects. The costumes by Kevin Hutchins offer a delightful twist on Victorian dress with smart touches like Dracula outfitted as a seductive bodybuilder in black leather and humorously bizarre wigs for actor Kevin Cristaldi playing female roles.

The cast creates a cohesive ensemble. As Dracula, Luke Sholl projects seductive narcissism and delightful over the top flamboyance. Ian Gould plays Jonathon Harker as a cautious nerd, who finds his inner courage with comic gusto, and does a witty humorous turn as the puppeteer for Lucy's suitors. Marc Cartier brings deadpan humor to Dr. Westfeldt and zany antics to the slightly deranged servant Renfield. Kevin Cristaldi gives game gender-bending portrayals of Mina, the awkward, unattractive, desperate sister, and Dr. Van Helsing, the take-no-prisoners, female, German doctor. Jessica Digiovanni as the sole female actor in the group plays the heroine, Lucy, with a combination of tongue-in-cheek propriety and a modern, steely reserve.

The ninety-minute romp delighted the sold-out audience, which laughed heartily throughout. There is an energy and sparkle at The Public Theatre in recent days that is most appealing to experience.

DRACULA A COMEDY OF TERRORS runs from October 11-27,2024 at The Public Theatre, 31 Maple St, Lewiston, Maine.