

The Mechanicals: Lunatic Fringe

2010 Repertory Season

Ariane Mnouchkine's:

MEPHISTO

Based on the Novel by Klaus Mann
Translated by Timberlake Wertenbaker
Directed by Christopher Weare
With the Full Mechanicals Company

Louis Nowra's:

COSI

Directed by Scott Sparrow
With the Full Mechanicals Company

Jaan Tatte's:

HIGHWAY CROSSING OR A TALE OF A GOLDEN FISH

Directed by Guy De Lancey
With Jason Potgieter, Andrew Laubscher, Deborah Vieyra & Louis Viljoen

Samuel Beckett's:

ENDGAME

Directed by Luke Ellenbogen
With Guy De Lancey, Adrian Collins, Nicholas Ellenbogen and Liz Szymczak



Lunatic Fringe

Lunatic fringe is a term used to characterise members of a usually political or social movement espousing extreme, eccentric, or fanatical views. It was coined by the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), to accurately describe some American anarchists.

PRESS RELEASE

The Mechanicals proudly present their 2010 Repertory Season:

THE MECHANICALS: LUNATIC FRINGE

4 plays. 3 theatres. 2 months. 1 company

MEPHISTO (by Ariane Mnouchkine, directed by Christopher Weare)

&

COSI (by Louis Nowra, directed by Scott Sparrow)

&

HIGHWAY CROSSING or A TALE OF A GOLDEN FISH

(by Jaan Tatte, directed by Guy De Lancey)

&

ENDGAME (by Samuel Becket, directed by Luke Ellenbogen)

The Little, Intimate and Arena Theatres, 37 Orange Street, Gardens.

7 July – 29 August 2010.

See below for specific show information, dates and times.

Bookings: **021 480 7129** OR lesche.devis@uct.ac.za

For more press information and PICS contact daniel.galloway@uct.ac.za

Following on from 2009's success with **THE BRITISH LINES TOUR** The Mechanicals are back with their 2010 Repertory season; **The Mechanicals: Lunatic Fringe.**

The Mechanicals: Lunatic Fringe showcases some of Cape Town's hottest theatre talent in 4 plays, playing in 3 theatres over 2 months performing in the company's much acclaimed *Repertory* style. Since the inception of The Mechanicals three years ago - Cape Town audiences have been treated to excellent theatre productions: *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Buried Child*, *The Zoo Story*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Blasted*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Birthday Party*, *Cowboy Mouth* and most recently a return sell-out season of the smash hits *Decadence* and *Frank 'n Stein*. Yet again this professional theatre collective come together, driven by passion and a pure love of theatre, to present to you four great plays which will make for a feast of theatre in July and August 2010.

Ariane Mnouchkine's:

MEPHISTO

Based on the 1936 Novel by Klaus Mann
Translated by Timberlake Wertenbaker
Directed by Christopher Weare
With the Full Mechanicals Repertory Company
Original Set Design by Peter Krummeck
Lighting Design by Daniel Galloway
Costume Design by Leigh Bishop

Ariane Mnouchkine's theatrical adaptation of the novel *Mephisto* (by Klaus Mann) is to be staged at the UCT Arena Theatre by The Mechanicals.

Mephisto is one of the modern classics on artistic integrity and political commitment. Klaus Mann's 1936 novel *Mephisto*, first published when Mann was in exile from the Nazis, was primarily an act of revenge against German actor Gustaf Grundgens. Mann, who worked with Grundgens, regarded him as a traitor for accepting Nazi patronage while his former colleagues were forced to flee the country. Ariane Mnouchkine's adaptation of Mann's *Mephisto* takes the emphasis off the "Mephisto" character who abandoned his communist roots for artistic ambition and collaborated with the Nazi regime, and places it onto the group of actors around him. We see a collection of socialists and incipient fascists, and watch how they react to Hitler's steady climb to power. Where does art stop and life begin? The question is vital, and fatal to them all.

Ariane Mnouchkine is a world renowned French theatre director. Mnouchkine and her company, the *Theatre du Soleil*, came to the attention of the English speaking world with the 1970 production about the French Revolution, *1789*. Today Mnouchkine is recognised as one of the first women directors to achieve an international reputation and her productions, spanning from Shakespeare to contemporary drama, have been widely acclaimed as being at the forefront of twentieth-century theatre.

Mephisto is about the devil in all of us. Based on a real life character, Gustaf Grundgens, the play shows how easy it is for artists to sell out to the state (in this case Nazi Germany), and how impossible it is to be 'only an actor' when the society around you is in political turmoil. The play examines the impact of fascism on the artistic integrity of a whole bunch of actors. It is a play which is both a fascinating historical document and a paradigm of any power game where moral instinct is sacrificed to political expediency.

Mnouchkine has said she sees the work more as a metaphor about collaboration than as an indictment of a particular actor. The play raises interesting contemporary questions.

Mephisto, is performed by the full Mechanicals Company and directed by the acclaimed Christopher Weare.

Mephisto plays in the **Arena Theatre** from 7 to 24 July on the following days:

7 (preview), 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17 (@15h00), 19, 21 (15h00 & 20h00), 23 & 24 July at 20h00

Tickets cost R100 with seating concessions at R80 & R60

For more information see www.themechanicals.co.za

BOOKINGS on **021 480 7129**

Louis Nowra's:

COSI

Directed by Scott Sparrow
With the Full Mechanicals Company
Lighting Design by Daniel Galloway

Set in a burnt out theatre, a manic depressive, a drug addict, a compulsive liar, a pyromaniac, an obsessive compulsive, a comatose pianist, a person suffering from adjustment disorder and one lost director, attempt to perform Mozart's master piece, the Opera *Così fan tutte*.

The opera itself was first performed in Vienna in 1790 and is regarded as a master piece, a slice of genius, or as the person suffering from manic depression puts it "the music of this opera keeps the world in harmony"

Così fan tutte translated means, *thus do all women or...all women are like that* and it challenges the notion of fidelity and love from all perspectives. The message of the opera is reflected in the play as *Così* is a human story about the boundaries of love and how the music and the journey of rehearsing this opera brings a dysfunctional group of people together in an extremely wacky but heartfelt way.

It is a comedy with a warm human story and although it is an adventure about the antics of a group of people suffering from mental illness trying to perform Mozart's opera, it brings home many truths about the dynamics of love which so happen to be explored in the opera itself. "It is a comedy, charming, so true to nature and capitally acted!" (Don Alfonso from the opera *Così fan tutte*)

Così, the semi-autobiographical play was written by award winning Australian playwright Louis Nowra and was first performed in Melbourne in 1992. It is now being performed by the full Mechanicals Company and directed by Scott Sparrow for the 2010 repertory season alongside *Mephisto*.

COSI plays in the **Little Theatre** from 13 to 31 July 2010 on the following days:

13 (preview), 14, 16, 17, 20, 22, 24 (@15h00), 26, 27, 28 (@15h00 & 20h00), 29, 30 at 20h00 & 31 (@15h00 & 20h00).

Tickets cost R100 with seating concessions at R80 & R60

For more information see www.themechanicals.co.za

BOOKINGS on **021 480 7129**

Jaan Tatte's:

HIGHWAY CROSSING OR A TALE OF A GOLDEN FISH

Directed by Guy De Lancey

With Jason Potgieter, Louis Viljoen, Deborah Vieyra & Andrew Laubscher

The age of access is bringing with it a new type of human being. The young people of the new 'protean' generation are comfortable conducting business and engaging in social activity in the worlds of electronic commerce and cyberspace and they adapt easily to the many simulated worlds that make up the cultural economy. There is a world that is more theatrical than ideological and more oriented towards a play ethos than towards a work ethos.

The play is about the possibility of love. In *Highway Crossing or A tale of a Golden Fish* the feelings of a young couple are tested by the dangerous lure of an unimaginable amount of money.

Lost in the woods on a stormy night, Laura and Roland seek refuge in a farmhouse where their host Oswald offers Roland one billion dollars for his fiancée. The money is real and Oswald claims it is a miracle gift given him by a golden fish in the lake. Already a huge hit in many other countries this remarkable Estonian play is a dark comedy about human nature and the choices we make at a moment's notice.

It is not important whether the world of Tatte's characters is located in Tallinn, New York or Berlin, because when it comes to dreams and love we are more similar than the geographical distances may at first have us believe.

In an epoch when the bulk of new drama offers us images of harsh and estranged, dirt-and-blood-coloured lives, where close relationships are destined to failure, Tatte's writing gives us a chance to live in a world where values exist.

On first appearance Tatte's plays seem to be very simple, but this simplicity is deceptive. The fluent and easily spoken dialogue tricks the reader or the viewer into a net of multi-level verbal misunderstandings and mental air pockets, from which one doesn't try to escape. It's good to be trapped in that net. It's a game.

Highway Crossing or a Tale of a Golden Fish plays in the **Intimate Theatre @ 20h00** in repertory with **Endgame** from 10 to 29 August 2010 on the following days

10 (preview), 11 (opens), 14 (@ 15h00), 17, 19, 21, 22 (@ 15h00), 25, 27 at 20h00, 28 & 29 (@ 15h00).

Tickets cost R100 with seating concessions at R80 & R60

For more information see www.themechanicals.co.za

BOOKINGS on **021 480 7129**

Samuel Beckett's:

ENDGAME

Directed by Luke Ellenbogen

With Guy De Lancey, Adrian Collins, Nicholas Ellenbogen and Liz Szymczak

The Mechanicals breathe life into **Endgame**, Samuel Beckett's timeless, classic theatrical Masterpiece

Beckett is one of the most celebrated and influential dramatists of the twentieth century. His 1953 play *Waiting for Godot* with its incongruent plot and seemingly pointless dialogue, helped advance the concept of a "Theatre of the Absurd" and is regarded as a masterpiece. Beckett's plays utilize non-standard and minimalist staging techniques and experimental language and character development. Beckett continually strove to remove the physicality of the dramatic experience, e.g. elaborate staging, intricate sets, etc., in an attempt to illustrate the inner turmoil of humanity, and to force the audience to reach a higher level of understanding without relying on the traditional forms of theatre. Beckett's innovative style and stark exploration into the human condition were considered ground-breaking and his influence is apparent throughout contemporary theatre right around the world.

In *Endgame*, Beckett again focused on two characters, bedraggled survivors of an apparent holocaust. The two men, Hamm (Guy De Lancey) and Clov (Adrian Collins), are faced with the nothingness of their existence as they attempt to validate their lives, eventually falling back on memories to justify their existence. Beckett uses chess as the play's controlling metaphor, and he explores the human dilemma, mortality, and God's existence, without providing simple answers, as his characters, and the audience, move through an uncertain existence. The game of chess becomes the metaphor that gives a seemingly structureless play a dramatic scheme. The characters in *Endgame* are chess pieces. The metaphorical king of *Endgame* is the centre of attention, and the rules of chess apply to the characters, their setting, and their situation. The protagonist of the play is Hamm, an aged master who is blind and not able to stand up, and his servant Clov, who cannot sit down. They exist in a grimy and seemingly post-apocalyptic bunker. The two characters, mutually dependent, have been fighting for years and continue to do so as the play progresses. Clov always wants to leave but never seems to be able. Also present are Hamm's legless parents Nagg (Nicholas Ellenbogen) and Nell (Liz Szymczak), who live in rubbish bins, request food or argue inanely.

Endgame plays in the **Intimate Theatre** in Repertory with **Highway Crossing @ 20h00** from 6 to 29 August 2010 on the following days:

12 (preview), 13 (opens), 14, 15 (@ 15h00), 18, 20, 21 (@ 15h00), 24, 26 & 28

Tickets cost R100 with seating concessions at R80 & R60

For more information see www.themechanicals.co.za

BOOKINGS on **021 480 7129**

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