

THEATER

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THEATER REVIEWS: AMERICAN TALES, IN ON IT

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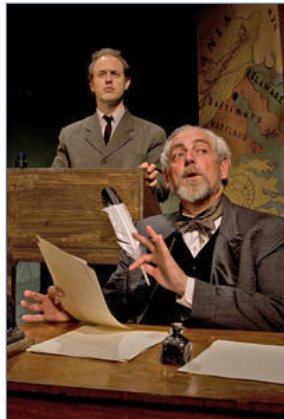
Monday, June 30, 2008 - 6:55 pm

GO AMERICAN TALES For these one-act musicals, writer-adaptor Ken Stone and composer Jan Powell turn to great names in American literature: Mark Twain's rollicking *The Loves of Alonzo Fitz Clarence* and *Rosannah Ethelton* and Herman Melville's enigmatic *Bartleby the Scrivener*. In Twain's tale, set in the early days of the telephone, feckless Alonzo (Daniel Blinkoff) attempts to call his aunt in Baltimore but somehow reaches Rosannah (Devon Sovari), in San Francisco. The two fall in love via long distance, but their romantic idyll is disrupted by her treacherous rejected suitor, Burley (Rafael Sbarge). The piece is a delicious, highly stylized comic trifle, with lilting songs that evoke and mock the music of the 1890s. *Bartleby* centers on the mild-mannered copy clerk (Sbarge), who refuses to either work or be fired for intransigence, replying simply, "I would prefer not to." The adapters cleverly expand Melville's brief tale, and Sbarge and Peter Van Norden, as his bemused employer, perform it skillfully. Kay Cole and Thor Steingraber direct with wit and dispatch on set designer Laura Fine Hawkes' fragmented map of the U.S., and A. Jeffrey Schoenberg supplies handsome period costumes, with fine musical direction by Steven Ladd Jones and Billy Thompson. Deaf West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., N. Hlywd.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 3 & 7:30 p.m.; thru Aug. 17. (866) 811-4111 or www.antaeus.org. An Antaeus Company production. (Neal Weaver)



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In on It



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American Tales



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Dupe



DUPE Alex Austin's melodrama centers on a photography collector determined to barter possession of a priceless photograph in exchange for a day — or a night — with a famous celebrity. In a coffeehouse, the normally timid Leonard (Gerard Marzilli) boldly approaches a woman who closely resembles a celebrated singer-songwriter named Carol Fitch (Gina Yates). The stranger insists she's someone else, but Leonard doggedly persists. Wanting to pique her interest, he tells her about the \$5 million photo he has acquired; commissioned in the 1930s by *Vogue*, its model was a beautiful Folies Bergère dancer named June (Danielle Van Beest, alternating with Lonni Silverman), whose notebooks Leonard also happens to have. As fascinated by the dead woman as he is with his reluctant companion, he recounts her decades-old tale, a secondary dramatic thread played out in intermittent flashbacks and culminating in her rape by a desperate admirer. The play's main tension turns on the is-she-or-isn't-she issue of his companion's identity, and whether she will make Leonard a happy man or wrest the photo from him in a craftier way. More interesting as a portrayal of idol obsession than a drama, the piece stumbles on its convoluted plot twists. Though he could use more nuance, Marzilli turns in a satisfactory performance under Bill Garrett's direction. But neither Yates nor the markedly lovely Van Beest exhibit much range. Designer David Goldstein's artfully composed set is a major plus. Two Roads Theatre, 4348 Tjunga Ave., Studio City; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2:30 p.m.; thru July 19. (866) 811-4111. (Deborah Klugman)

HERPES TONIGHT! Solo performer Corey Moosa's identity is forged by two things: pop culture and his herpes diagnosis. He swirls them together here, renaming herpes as *Star Trek's* "Orion Slave Girl"; cold sores become "the Incredible Hulk," and HPV is "Oscar the Grouch." The ex who infected him is "Kelly Ripa," while his first love is "Kathie Lee Gifford," and his best pals are "Billy Crystal" and "George Clooney." With such distancing jocularity, the kitsch factor is high, the empathy and honesty nearly nonexistent. Moosa and co-writer Brian Shoaf are obsessed with easy jokes; Moosa alludes to feeling guilty for pursuing the disease by going commando with "Kelly," flushed with hormones and invulnerability, but this particular scene's really about him clutching Ripa's 8x10 and moaning "Oh Kelly, I want you so bad." Bopping between sincerity and standup, director Jose Zayas can't overcome the production's offhand casualness, although the moments when Moosa confronts the stigma of herpes via our culture of silence, misinformation and media hype (in the 1980s, a *Time* magazine cover called herpes "Today's Scarlet Letter") are more engaging than his slide show of faux-movie titles, like *Herpes* and *The Hendersons*. Lounge Theatre, 6201 Santa

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BY JONATHAN GOLD

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THE PARISIAN ROOM: ALAIN GIRAUD'S

ANISSETTE BRASSERIE

BY JONATHAN GOLD

A glass of Sancerre, a half-dozen oysters, and a French chef who's found home

THE GAYEST WEDDING, AT LA BREA TAR PITS

BY DAVE WHITE

With doughnuts from Bob's for afters

VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN: TIMUR

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CATCH OF THE DAY

ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA, THREE IF BY BGM-109 TOMAHAWK LAND ATTACK MISSILE

Mon, Jun 30, 10:53 pm

NIKKI FINKE'S DEADLINE HOLLYWOOD

DAILY

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Mon, Jun 30, 6:30 pm

PLAY

ARTHUR MAGAZINE HITS ITS MARK

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SLIDESHOWS



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