

January 19 - February 3, 2007

Anton in Show Business

Running Time 2:20 - one intermission

A bright and brisk backstage comedy

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This backstage comedy by Jane Martin about a troupe of actresses trying to mount a production of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* in San Antonio Texas has a cast of eleven handling eighteen parts. Even with three actresses doubling, tripling and one even quadrupling on characters, it still feels rather intimate and small. This is principally because the focus is often confined to the three actresses playing the three sisters. Director Chuck Dluhy has in these three a trio to rely on, and he builds the evening on their skills. Add in the occasional gem of a bit from one of the supporting actresses in one or another of their characters and the result is a fun evening lampooning and lambasting the peculiarities of "theater folk," but which always manages to stop just shy of insulting people who devote their time and effort to putting on a show.



Storyline: Three actresses prepare to appear in a regional production of Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*. Each exhibits some traits of the character she is to portray, but each brings a contemporary sensibility to the mix as they form an ensemble, develop their relationships with the director, stage manager and other people involved in the production, and deal with a pushy theater critic.

The play premiered in 2000 at the Humana Festival of New Plays, where all of Jane Martin's plays have premiered. It was the winner of the American Theatre Critics Association's Steinberg New Play award in 2001, one of a number of awards that have come to the playwright. There is a bit of a mystery surrounding her, as she has kept completely out of the public eye and rumors about her actual identity have circulated. (Could she really be the nom-de-plume of the long time artistic director of the Actors Theatre which is the host of the Humana Festival?) Never mind all that. The only question of importance is "Is the play any good?" The answer: Yes. Potomac Region audiences can be grateful to Port City and Chuck Dluhy for this opportunity to experience it.

The three actresses at the center of all the action are all very good. The always impressive Amy Hard puts her sharp good looks to good use as she plays a soap opera actress trying to "go legit" after getting as much of a career boost as she's going to get from her breast augmentation surgery. Caitlin Brodnick is very funny as the local Texas blond with the thick drawl who wants to step up to bigger roles in more important shows, and Leta Hall is touching as an actress whose career is going downhill just about as rapidly as her health, as she worries about a recurrence of her breast cancer.

Among those who take on multiple roles are Lori Muhlstein, who, in the persona of the white wigged director announces with equal import her interpretations of Chekhov's text and her personal information such as "I pee now!" Katie Gentic switches gender as easily as switching job descriptions. Rhonda Carter has at least two very strongly defined characters among the four she plays. There's great fun, too, at the hand of Sara Joy Lebowitz, as a theater critic who expounds from her seat in the audience.

Written by Jane Martin. Directed by Chuck Dluhy. Design: John Downing (set) Eileen Farrell (costumes) Kendel Taylor (makeup, hair and wigs) Rob Cork (properties) Les Zidel (lights) Chuck Dluhy and Frank Pasqualino (sound) Douglas Olmsted (photography) Donna Reynolds (stage manager). Cast: Caitlin Brodnick, Jennifer Calhoun, Rhonda Carter, Katie Gentic, Leta Hall, Amy Hard, Sara Joy Lebowitz, Kate Masters, Lori Muhlstein, Jennifer Reitz, Susan Schulman.