



AMERICAN MASTER OF THE STAGE: The sublime Frank Langella (left) & Adam Driver in 'Man And Boy'. Photo: Joan Marcus

Theater Review

Frank Langella shines in

dated *Man & Boy*



MAN AND BOY

Written by Terence Rattigan

Directed by Maria Aitken

Through November 27, 2011

American Airlines Theatre

227 West 42nd Street

(212-719-1300), www.RoundaboutTheatre.org

By David NouNou

First presented in 1963 with Charles Boyer portraying the world-renowned ruthless financier Gregor Antonescu, the show was a flop. However, due to advance ticket sales on Boyer's star power, it managed to limp on Broadway for a few weeks. So it is a curious choice for the Roundabout to revive a play that was dated and a flop in its initial run. The salvation for this moth-riddled show is twofold: The first being people can nowadays relate to corporate greed; and the second, and more important, is Frank Langella.

Americans have always spoken with awe and reverence about British actors by just mentioning their last names: Olivier, Gielgud, and Richardson. Well, Americans can now be proud of a homegrown actor by throwing Langella in that august group. From entry to exit, one's gaze is riveted to him; it is as if no one else exists on that stage. Even when he is silent and others have the stage, it is impossible to take one's eyes off him. This is the power of stage presence and an actor knowing his craft to the minutest detail of the character he is portraying.

The show is set in 1934, in a basement apartment in Greenwich Village belonging to Basil Anthony (Adam Driver), a man who five years earlier tried to shoot his father and start a new life as a pianist. On this particular night Basil is visited by his father who is none other than Gregor Antonescu and his right-hand man Sven Johnson (Michael Siberry). Due to Antonescu's greed and misappropriation of funds, a merger between two companies is falling through, and as a last-ditch effort, he visits his son to use him as a pawn against the president (Zach Grenier) of one of the companies with which he is trying to form a merger.

Credit must be given to Maria Aitken for her direction, especially in the first act. The second act falls apart due to its excesses in melodrama. However, she does keep things moving at a brisk pace and gets

solid performances from Michael Siberry (especially in good form here), and Zach Grenier. It is a pleasure to watch these two actors grow with each successive role in recent years, whether on or off Broadway. Adam Driver as the son is fine, but his poutiness should have been reined in. It is best to forget about the two female performances as it is puzzling what era they are portraying.

As a viewer and a curious observer who appreciates the small details that go on a stage, I was mesmerized by Langella flicking his fountain pen as he was writing a note toward the end of Act Two. Yes, it is a small bit, which could go unnoticed, because who remembers a fountain pen today? I kept wondering who injected that bit in the scene. Was it the director or the actor? Regardless, it is a moment that any future actor who has serious aspirations for the stage has to know about the character he is portraying, regardless of period. Watching Langella creating magic on stage in an otherwise lackluster play is a master class for any future actor.

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