



Chibeau

Edmond Chibeau looks at performance and theatre from the avant-garde communication perspective

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THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2017

EURYDICE RHUL'S

Eurydice

Sarah Ruhl

Studio Theatre UCONN

23 March 2017

Review Edmond Chibeau

Helene Kvale (Director), Katherine Paik (Scenic Design), Danielle Verkennes (Lighting Design), Jelena Antanasijevic (Costume Design), Pornchanok Kanchanabanca (Original Music and Sound Design), and Jason Swift (Stage Manager).

Eurydice is a reboot of the Orpheus myth. Sarah Ruhl tells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice that has been told and retold since Virgil's Georgics and Ovid's Metamorphosis, but she focuses on Eurydice rather than on than her musician husband Orpheus.

Near the beginning of the play



**Orpheus says,
“Maybe you
should make up
your own
thoughts.
Instead of
reading them in
a book”**

**Shortly after
she arrives in
hell, Eurydice
faces a
hermeneutic
crisis. What is**

she to do with a handwritten piece of paper that may be a letter from her father? And later, how should she deal with a large codex that may contain the complete works of Shakespeare, dropped from the land of the living by her husband? One good technique for extracting meaning from a text might be to wear it on one’s head. Or perhaps standing barefooted on top of it might be the right approach. That crisis of interpretation must be faced by the writer, the character, the actor, and the director, as well as the whole production team that tries to examine the story of Eurydice and Orpheus.

Director Helene Kvale is to be commended for taking on a difficult script that is alternative, oppositional and outside the mainstream. I look forward to seeing more of her productions in the future. American theatre needs more work that is willing to be complex and abstract.

There are places in the dialog where Ruhl's naturalistic speech changes rather abruptly to a more poetic and contextual language. The meaning is not literal, not in the dictionary definition of the words, but is meant to be palpable in its manifestation as speech on the body of the performers.

One might have wished to see a bigger change in the style of acting to accompany those shifts in dialogic style; say from a more representational to a more presentational mode.

As Eurydice, Sarah Elizabeth Jensen has a warm and calming stage presence that makes it difficult to take our eyes off her. She is articulate and clear in her interpretation.

Kent Coleman, who plays her father cuts a sharp figure on stage. He has a face that comes across the footlights and that



Sarah Jensen as Eurydice in “Eurydice” by Sarah Ruhl
Photo: Gerry Goldstein

a film camera would love. He plays every line and every transition with galvanizing perfection. Coleman has a jaw like a young James Joyce; he should put together a one-man show of excerpts from Joyce's poetry, stories, novels, and the play "Exiles."

On Thursday, Zack Dictakis got stronger as the evening went on. His newly-wed joy turns into a serious understanding of longing, and hope against despair, as his character descends to Hades to attempt to rescue his wife.

Coleman Churchill cuts a sharp figure as both the Nasty Interesting Man and as the Lord of the Underworld.

The chorus of Vivienne James, Kristen Wolfe, and Jennifer Sapozhnikov are just about perfect in both their pitch and timing.

The production team creates an environment that is perfect for the piece and is an important part to the experience.

Lighting designer Danielle Verkennes uses many different instruments and techniques, but does not overuse any of them. The fog machine is just enough to lend mystery to the lighting. And the one or two times when the lighting is very powerful are times when it makes perfect sense within the meaning of the play and tempo of this particular production. Near the end of the evening a powerful HMI light shines through holes in the set to send beams of light across the stage and into the audience. This lighting design shines.

The set, by Katherine Paik, is both spare and ever-changing. A series of lines coming down from above create a changing mood according to what light is cast upon them. A very important part of this play is the elevator with a rainstorm inside it. The rainstorm-elevator is both well designed and well executed...and very wet.


Costume Designer, Jelena Antanasijevic, brings color and excitement to the play with a range of textures and styles that are drawn from several epochs and places, but blend together to create an integrated whole.

Pornchanok Kanchanabanca delivers a sound bed that serves the production without overpowering it. Nok's work is both understated and effective.

The management team of Artistic Director, Michael Bradford, and Managing Director, Matthew J. Pugliese, present a smooth

theatre organization that is not afraid to take a chance on producing important, meaningful work.

Labels: [Danielle Verkennes](#), [Helene Kvale](#), [Jelena Antanasijevic](#), [Jennifer Sapozhnikov](#), [Katherine Paik](#), [Kent Coleman](#), [Kristen Wolfe](#), [Michael Bradford](#), [Pugliese](#), [Sarah Elizabeth Jensen](#), [Vivienne James](#), [Zack Dictakis](#)

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