

Metropolis' revival of so-so 'Boeing-Boeing' benefits from able cast



Bernard (Rian Jarell), left, explains how he juggles three women to friend Robert (Matt Gall) in Metropolis Performing Arts Centre's revival of the 1962 farce "Boeing-Boeing."
(*Courtesy of Ellen Prather*)



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"Boeing Boeing" -- ★ ★ 1/2

Within moments of "Boeing-Boeing" taking off, it's all too apparent where this French farce will touch down.

Marc Camoletti's innocuous 1962 play, about a man romancing three women at the same time, follows a predictable route: It glides along on the requisite riotous attempts to maintain a deception, followed by a cheeky confrontation and a happy ending.

"Boeing-Boeing," running through March 17 at the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, embraces familiar tropes including miscommunication and mistaken identities, secrets and schemes -- all spiced with a bit of PG-rated innuendo. The result is a formulaic, overly long comedy.

Metropolis' solid production, however, makes up for some of the play's shortcomings. Vigorously staged by director Joe Lehman, "Boeing-Boeing" is ably performed by a well-rehearsed cast with spot-on timing and a flair for physical comedy.



German flight attendant Gretchen (Sophia Foldvari) and Robert (Matt Gall) try to deny their growing attraction in the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre's production of "Boeing-Boeing" directed by Joe Lehman. - Courtesy of Ellen Prather

The action centers on the romantic life of architect and American transplant Bernard (Rian Jairell), who lives the 1960s pop-culture version of a heterosexual man's ideal. He's single. He resides in a fab Paris apartment (a chic, pale blue, bachelor pad accented with bold colors and designed by Jeremy Hollis). And he has three fiancées, all flight attendants unaware of the others' existence. Relying on airline

schedules that effectively keep two of the women in the air and one in his bed, Bernard successfully manages his affairs with some help from his put-upon housekeeper Berthe (a wry, weary Lauren Goode).

He explains the advantages of prenuptial polygamy to his friend Robert (Matt Gall, whose antics earned spontaneous applause). Recently arrived from Wisconsin, Robert longs to marry for the "social advantages," meaning sex, which Gall makes comically clear.

Bernard, who craves variety and fears boredom, insists his way is better.

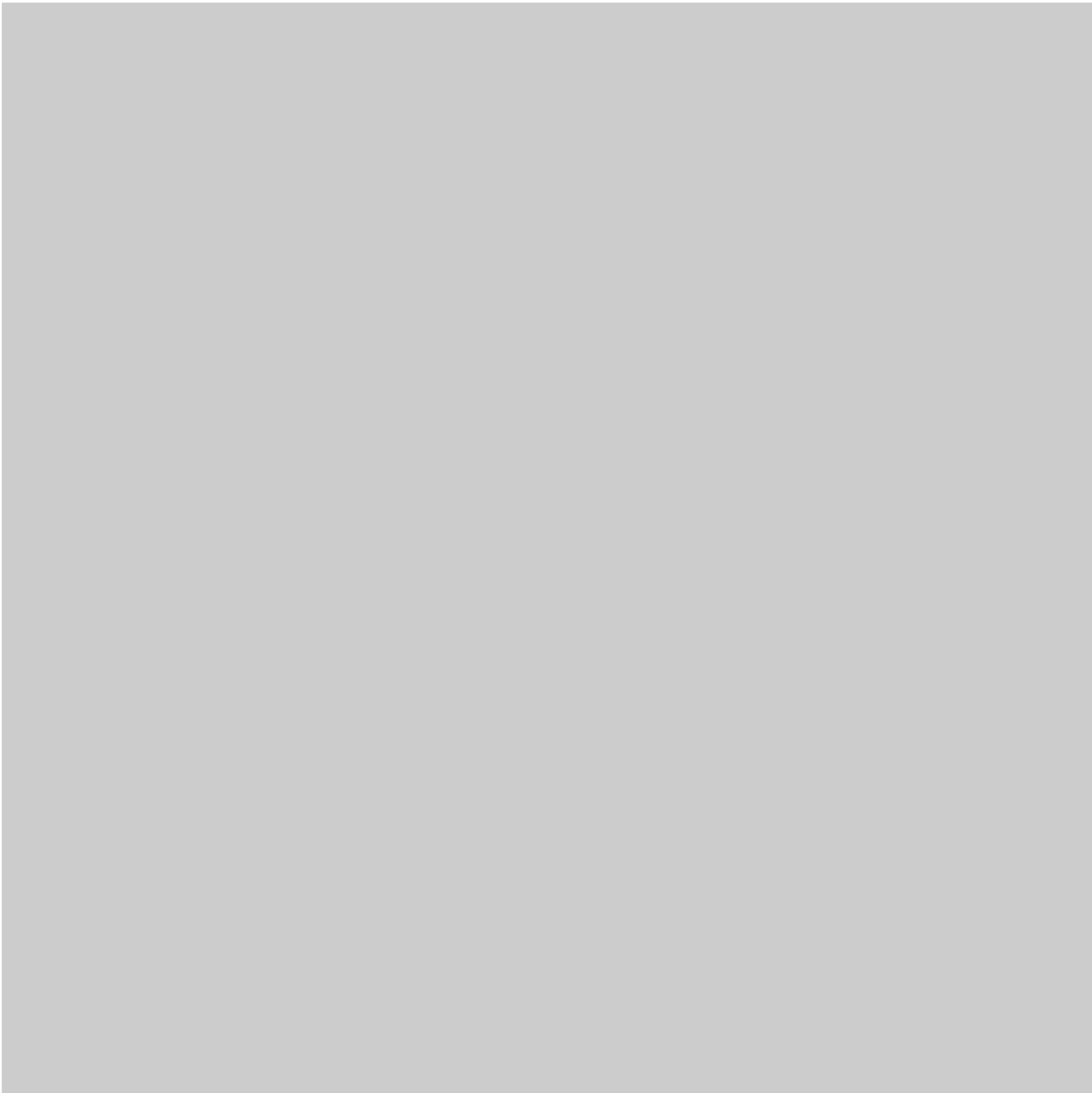


Sarah Kmiecik, left, Matt Gall and Rian Jairell star in director Joe Lehman's revival of Marc Camoletti's 1962 farce "Boeing-Boeing" at Metropolis Performing Arts Centre. - Courtesy of Ellen Prather

"You get all the advantages of married life with none of the drawbacks," he says. "Fiancees are much more friendly than wives. And you don't need all that many. I do very well with three."

To have fewer, he explains, would be monotonous. More? Too tiring.

Initially skeptical, Robert comes to appreciate Bernard's lifestyle after meeting American fiancée Gloria (the deliciously sharp-edged Maeghan Looney), Italian fiancée Gabriella (an ebullient Sarah Kmiecik) and German fiancée Gretchen (Sophia Foldvari, in a nicely comic turn). But Robert's admiration turns to panic when all three women unexpectedly show up at the same time, forcing him to do some fast talking to maintain his friend's deception.



Flight attendant Gloria (Maeghan Looney), second from right, announces shocking news to fiancé Bernard (Rian Jairell), left, his friend Robert (Matt Gall), center, and Bernard's housekeeper Berthe (Lauren Goode), right, in the comedy "Boeing-Boeing" at the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre. - Courtesy of Ellen Prather

Jairell has the easy confidence of a man who seems to have figured out all the angles. No matter that satisfying his own desires means deceiving women he claims to love. Then again, male caricatures from 1960s sex farces weren't exactly hip to the inherent sexism that underscores such an unequal relationship.

Much of the play's physical comedy falls to Gall and Foldvari, who's terrific as the dangerously ungainly Gretchen. But it's Gall's delightfully flustered Robert and the actor's deft handling of comic shtick that elicited the biggest laughs from comedy's equivalent of a puddle-jumper: fine for a short hop, but unsatisfying for the long haul.

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Location: Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, 111 W. Campbell St., Arlington Heights, (847) 577-2121 or metropolisarts.com
(<http://metropolisarts.com>)

Showtimes: 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 3 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday through March 17

Running time: About two hours, 15 minutes including intermission

Tickets: \$40

Parking: Nearby garage and street parking available

Rating: For older teens and adults, contains sexual innuendo and references