

Review: Comedy 'Boeing Boeing' soars at Metropolis

By RIKKI LEE TRAVOLTA

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“Boeing Boeing,” now playing at the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre in Arlington Heights through March 17, is a hearty comedy about serial bachelor Bernard – an American expatriate living in Paris, France. Bernard keeps his love life from getting stale by maintaining engagements to three unsuspecting fiancées.

All of Bernard’s fiancées are airline stewardesses for competing airlines. By tracking the three lady loves’ travel schedules, Bernard is able to keep the three from ever meeting... until the airlines begin employing the use of Boeing aircraft, cutting down travel times and creating a nightmare scenario in which all three stewardesses are in town at the same time.

As Bernard, Rian Jarell fits the bill well as the handsome playboy toying with the emotions of the three stewardess fiancées – one from America, one from Italy and one from Germany.

In the calm before the storm, Bernard's old friend Robert comes to town to visit and is thrust into the position of trying to cover for Bernard as his various love interests come in and out of his palatial Paris flat.

Matt Gall, as Robert, is the glue that keeps the comedy churning. Gall has expert comedic timing and provides a brilliant interpretation of a fish-out-of-water Wisconsin native trying to keep up with Bernard's web of lies in order to prevent the three stewardesses from finding out about each other – when often two or more of them are in Bernard's home at the same time.

All three stewardesses are well played. Sophia Foldvari provides excellent comedic fodder as German stewardess Gretchen. Sarah Kmiecik delivers a feisty interpretation of Italian stewardess Gabriella. And, Maeghan Looney is appropriately sultry as the American stewardess Gloria who has a seemingly insatiable sexual appetite.

The play wouldn't work without Lauren Goode as French housekeeper Bertha, whose dry wit brings many laughs as she attempts to help Robert and Bernard keep their juggling act from falling to pieces.

The humor in "Boeing Boeing" relies on precision entrances and exits as the three stewardesses narrowly miss each other as they enter and depart Bernard's apartment. Director Joe Lehman has his cast working in perfect comedic clockwork. "Boeing Boeing" is definitely a prize feather for Lehman to put in his director's cap.

Helping to convey the ambiance of the piece is an impressively beautiful set by scenic designer Jeremy Hollis. The set is grand and expansive and sets the mood perfectly.

With an international cast of characters, the play relies heavily on accents. This can be tricky, but dialect coach Elise Kauzlaric has done a fantastic job keeping the characters authentic.

"Boeing Boeing," written by Marc Camoletti and translated to English by Beverly Cross and Francis Evans, definitely is a flight worth taking. So fasten your seatbelts and enjoy the ride.

• Rikki Lee Travolta has headlined, directed and choreographed productions around the country. He has written two novels and a memoir. He currently hosts a weekly musical theater radio program, "It's Showtime with Rikki Lee," on 101.5 FM or streaming and podcasts on www.huntleyradio.com. Visit www.rikkileetravolta.com.

"BOEING BOEING"

WHEN: Through March 17

WHERE: The Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, 111 W. Campbell St., Arlington Heights

COST & INFO: Set in 1960s Paris. Confident bachelor Bernard prides himself on being able to discretely maneuver his three globe-hopping flight attendant fiancées. With the help of his impeccable scheduling abilities and his begrudging housekeeper, Bernard successfully has kept them apart, until now. Rated at least PG. Tickets \$40. Tickets and information: 847-577-2121 or www.metropolisarts.com.

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