

ADAPTATION OF “BOEING BOEING” IS A COMEDIC RIOT

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February 14, 2018

French theater is famous for its fast-moving farce, and Marc Camoletti’s “Boeing Boeing” has reached cult classic status on both sides of the Atlantic since its debut in 1962. The current production at the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre in suburban Arlington Heights is a reminder that it is difficult to do significant damage to this high-powered parade of comedic situations.

The playwright behind this bachelor pad madness is Marc Camoletti, (1923-2003) a Swiss-born French citizen who was the author of just over 40 plays, 18 of which were major hits in Europe. Camoletti is not as well known on this side of the Atlantic, but “Don’t Dress for Dinner” and “Boeing Boeing” have settled in for regular revivals in regional theaters.

“Boeing Boeing” hit the English speaking world as a sensation with a seven-year run in London, good for 2,000 performances.

In 1965, when it was transferred to Broadway, American audiences did not seem quite as amused, as “Boeing Boeing” ran for just 23 performances. But comedian Jerry Lewis noticed something, and his 1965 film helped keep it in the mind of American audiences. Hiring Oscar-winning screenwriter Edward Anhalt and director John Rich, Lewis teamed up with Tony Curtis and Thelma Ritter and showed that the silver screen could salvage this story for American audiences. Slowly revivals came in US regional productions, and in 2008, it returned to Broadway as a hit, with Mark Rylance winning a Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play.

This is very much 1960s’ humor, playing the situation of too many women on the string arriving at inconvenient times. It’s the scheduled bachelor pad in chaos as a parade of flight attendants (‘stewardess’ to those with a 60’s vocabulary) arrive off schedule. Enter a nerdy friend visiting from Wisconsin, who gets swept into the chaos, and you have a grand set up for slamming doors and close calls. Add a wisecracking housekeeper to the mix and you have quite a stage for an avalanche of comedic setups.

Metropolis director, Joe Lehman, uses a translation of “Boeing Boeing” by Beverley Cross and Francis Evans which keeps the humor flying at a frenetic pace. Lehman’s blocking and pacing of the production are worthy of the author’s intent, but some elements are missing.

Lauren Goode as the wisecracking housekeeper has some of the best lines, but her heavy accent and fast delivery regrettably obscure some real comedic potential. The parade of characters that slash through Bernard’s (Rian Jarell) bachelor flat in Paris have their moments of high and low comedy, but director Lehman pushes this already frenzied comedy into many an overwrought scene.

Lehman has assembled a solid cast of visitors who create the chaos as the nerdy Wisconsin friend (Matt Gall), the sultry Italian stewardess, Gabriella (Sarah Kmiecik), the saucy American Gloria (Meghan Looney) and the assertive German Gretchen

(Sophia Foldvari) all assemble in Bernard's Paris apartment to create that wonderful chaos that makes great comedic setups.

Yet, much gets lost, or at least, obscured in over-the-top moments that push an already funny script beyond its natural borders. But, so much funny material is here, the audience can still walk away smiling remembering the moments that worked.

[The Metropolis Arts Performing Centre](#) is in the heart of downtown suburban Arlington Heights. "Boeing-Boeing" will run until March 17th.

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