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MARIA TZAVARAS | Nov 03, 2011 - 8:06 AM | Report a Typo or Correction

East Side Players presents Lettice and Lovage until Nov. 12

When life becomes a boring daily existence, what better way to liven it up than to draw inspiration for the great figures and moments of the past?

This is how two women find themselves passing their free time in East Side Player's premiere show of the season, Lettice and Lovage, by Peter Shaffer.

The show centres around the unlikely friendship between two women: Lettice (Heather Goodall) who is a tour guide for the Fustian House, a historical building in Wiltshire, England, and her employer, Lotte Schoen (Malorie Mandolidis), who works for the Preservation Trust, which owns the house.

Lettice is the eccentric daughter of a starlet actress of yesteryear, who tries to live by her mother's motto of 'Enlarge! Enliven! Enlighten!' However, she also adds embellish to the list, and takes it to extremes while giving the history of the Faustian House to its visitors.

In an amusing opening scene, you can see by the tourists' faces that the story she tells is as boring and dreary as the house itself, and this prompts Lettice to liven the story up.

Fast forward to a few days later, and there is a crowd of tourists happily lapping up an incredibly exaggerated, and false, story of the building's history, much to Lettice's happiness. However, when Lotte shows up, Lettice's days of telling tall tales are over.

Weeks later, Lotte, feeling bad for having fired Lettice, shows up at her flat to offer her another job, and over some homemade alcoholic concoction made by Lettice, the two become fast friends while reminiscing about their past and unfulfilled lives.

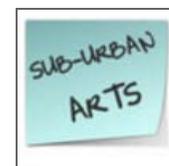
Besides their disappointment at what isn't, what's also revealed is their mutual love of the beauty and excitement of the past (like how exciting the execution of Mary Queen of Scots was), and this becomes the glue that bonds them, and what ends up injecting the excitement they both desire.

East Side Players presents Lettice and Lovage. It runs until Nov. 12, 8 p.m., with a 2 p.m. matinee on Nov. 6, at the Papermill Theatre, 67 Pottery Rd. Tickets: \$20 and students are \$15. To purchase tickets, please call 416-425-0917 or visit them online at www.eastsideplayers.ca

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This play seems to be a slight departure from East Side Players' usual shows, as it's more subtle in its plot, but high in character value. This may translate into whether you like the show or not dependent on whether you believe and enjoy the two main characters.

Lettice is a combination of Bridget Jones meets Anne of Green Gables as an adult. She is just as wondrous and colourful about things and just as talkative, using old, Elizabethan words to convey even the simplest things.

Lotte, on the other hand, is more subdued, but is drawn to Lettice's dramatic world and romantic notions from the past. The two together make for a very entertaining and funny duo.

The actresses who portray these two strong characters give amazing performances, and truly carry these roles with believability, chemistry and ease. You can't help but enjoy some of their banter, which at times is fast and furious with funny moments hidden throughout.

However, the story itself is one that either you appreciate for its simple pleasures or not, making it a show that may not be for everyone. Otherwise, if you enjoy a show with stellar dialogue and talented performers, this is the show for you.

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