

MOONEY on theatre

REVIEW: PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE (EAST SIDE PLAYERS)

FEBRUARY 26, 2017 | STEPHEN LUBIN | 1 COMMENT



Einstein and Picasso walk into a bar... cozy, funny theatre ensues on Toronto stages

Picasso and Einstein meet in a bar in 1904. It sounds like the setup for a joke, but in the case of *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* it's the setup for many jokes in this one-act comedy by none other than Steve Martin. *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* is being put on by the East Side Players at the Papermill Theatre (67 Pottery Rd.) until Mar 11, 2017.

This is a charming little play, often put on by community theatre troupes like the [East Side Players](#). This production got plenty of laughs, and gave each of its actors some time to shine. I really appreciated it for what it was, and it's clear that a lot of effort went into this show.

The Lapin Agile is actually a real bar/cabaret in Monmartre that Picasso (played by Declan Ryan in this production) used to frequent. There is even a painting by Picasso called [Au Lapin Agile](#) that depicts the bar and its resident seductress Germaine, who you'll see in this show as well (played by Julie Cloutier).

Steve Martin is actually a huge art enthusiast, and recently curated a [Lawren Harris](#) exhibit at the AGO. Thus, the script for [Picasso at the Lapin Agile](#) is surprisingly informed and occasionally nuanced. The result is a tight, charming little play that carries itself well. It's very hard to get this show wrong, so even though some parts of this production felt unpolished, it was always able to keep me thoroughly entertained. It made for a delightful community theatre production.

I did think that at times the actors could stand to bring up their energy levels. This is a very zany show with a wacky cast of characters. It would be fun to see everyone really let loose, and with a short runtime (just under 1.5 hrs) it wouldn't be overbearing. There was also some trouble with projection and I had a little difficulty hearing the actors at times.

That said, there were still plenty of laughs to be had and there was a lot of heart in this show. Steve Ness was consistently funny as the bar's resident drunk Gaston, and I was extremely impressed by Adriana Vasquez as Suzanne, one of Picasso's (many) muses.

Each actor was given their moment to shine though, and each impressed me in different ways. Dakota Arsenault was sweet as a young Albert Einstein, and he had some great interplay with Cloutier's Germaine and Scott Murdock's bar owner Freddy. Marcus Kage enters later in the show as a "mysterious visitor" and his performance was a slow burn, but the audience couldn't help falling in love with him.

Some of the movements felt repetitive to me. At times I liked director Ken Stern's blocking, but other times it felt a bit stilted. Nonetheless, this is a show that highlights its actors' best qualities through having a fast pace and dialogue that's funny in its own right.

The set was quite pretty too. It really felt like my guest and I had time-travelled into a bar at the turn of the 20th century. It felt cozy in the theatre and I think [East Side Players](#) has put on a show that's very inviting.

Much like the Lapin Agile itself, this play isn't too flashy and it's not perfect, but it has a certain "je ne sais quoi" that made for a nice evening.

Details:

- Picasso at the Lapin Agile is playing at The Papermill Theatre (67 Pottery Rd.) until Mar 11, 2017
- Shows are at 8:00 PM
- Tickets are \$8-20 and can be purchased [online](#) or at the door
- Run time is approximately 1.5 hours, with no intermission

Image of Dakota Arsenault and Edward Karek by Vince Burns

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ONE THOUGHT ON "REVIEW: PICASSO AT THE LAPIN AGILE (EAST SIDE PLAYERS)"

Edward Karek

FEBRUARY 26, 2017 AT 6:33 PM

Thanks Steve for coming!