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Magazine**

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by Peter Shaffer

Directed by John Fisher

**Theatre Rhinoceros, at
The Eureka Theatre
November 25 - December 10, 2016**



Review by Kedar K. Adour MD

A dynamic but disconcerting Equus at the Eureka by Theatre Rhino

Equus the play by Peter Shaffer exploded on the London theatrical scene in 1973 through 1975 before moving to Broadway where it ran for over 1000 performances before becoming a movie in 1977. In simplistic terms it is a story about a psychiatrist who attempts to treat a 17 year old youngster who committed a horrible crime putting out the eyes of six horses with a sharp tool. The part of the psychiatrist Martin Dysart has been played by such luminaries as Anthony Hopkins, Richard Burton, Leonard Nimoy and Anthony Perkins. Peter Firth gained acclaim as the young man Alan Strang in both the London and New York productions. Theatre Awards were heaped on the play including the Tony Award. The most recent professional revival of *Equus* was in 2007 in the West End and 2008 on Broadway starring Richard Griffiths and Daniel Radcliffe who played in the Harry Potter movies. John Fisher plays Dysart and Morgan Lange plays Alan Strang in this Rhino staging.

As well as being a psychiatric drama it is a mystery with many twists and turns getting to "why" Alan Strang committed the horrible act. Woven into that story is Dysart's insecurity questioning his treatments and eventual future life of his many young patients. Shaffer has written a beginning and ending monolog for Dysart outlining his self-doubts. In this Rhino production the impacts of those monologs is lost and are almost unintelligible due extreme pace of the delivery without nuance.

Shaffer deftly brings in standard Freudian concepts that define Alan's upbringing that includes a doting religious mother Dora (Ann Lawler), a domineering father Frank (Rudy Guerrero) and potential girlfriend Jill (Iris Haas-Biel). But it is the mystical/love attachment to the horse Elevar that he rides bare-back and nude during the night whom he considers a God he names *Equus* that is the driving force of his perversity.

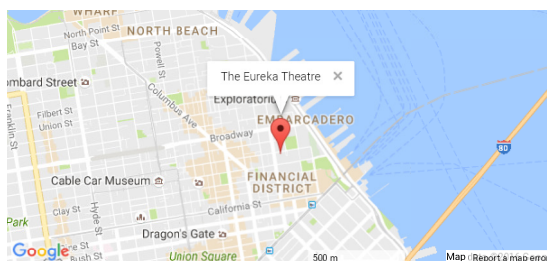
The initial non-communication between Dysart and Alan is a tug of war of wills with some brilliant scenes and devices introduced that includes hypnosis and the power of suggestion by Dysart that leads to the final gasping breakthrough.

With the exception of Fisher and Lange the other cast members play multiple roles and each play a horse. It is the staging that captures the audience with each actor wearing gleaming replicas of a horse head and stomping with elevated metal horses hoofs. The mostly bare stage has a central rotating area that allows the physical action to dominate yet provide an intimate space for the quiet scenes. The sound effects and lighting add to the drama. Morgan Lange handles his difficult role just a cut below superb and matches Fisher line for line in their doctor/patient relationship. The nude scene by Lange and Iris Haas-Biel has just the right touch of uncertainty. Rudy Guerrero and Ann Lawler invest their multiple roles with individuality.

Running time about two hours including a 10 minute intermission.

CAST: John Fisher (Director; Dysart), Rudy Guerrero (Nugget/Mr. Strang/Horseman/Dalton), Iris Haas-Biel (Jill; Assistant Director), Morgan Lange (Alan Strang), Ann Lawler (Hesther/Mrs. Strang/Nurse).

TECH CREDITS: Jenna Apollonia (Stage Manager), Lawrence Helman (Publicist), Gilbert Johnson (Scenic Designer), Sean Keehan (Lighting Designer), Daisy Neske (Costume Designer), David Wilson (Graphics; Photography; Ads).



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