

Coronado – A Total Knockout; Inspector General – Insanely Funny; Airwaves Exchange

by Buzzin' Lee Hartgrave, Mar. 28, 2008



Graham Beckel in Government Inspector. Photo: Kevin Berne.

THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR

What makes this production of TGI so funny, is that it is closer to truth than not. Look around, there are crooked Mayors, Postal workers that read your mail, and Crooked Magistrate's and other Politico's who are constantly wheedling money out of their poor subjects. Graft and greed is an everyday occurrence in this small town in Russia. And where does the money go? To keep up the towns infrastructure and schools? No, don't be silly. It goes into the pockets of all of the above. We may laugh about what is on the stage, but it also painfully points out that we are surrounded by con artists, who are usually in high positions. What is they say in Cabaret? Money, Money, Money!

In Gogol's time – Russia corruption was found in all forms of government. Petty Bureaucrats made a habit of pocketing money that was intended for public works. O.K. Go ahead and sing: "San Francisco, where is that Golden Gate?" Oh, I forgot it's in your pocket. You melted it down. Well, we know one thing – they haven't paved the roads with it.

The play exposes it all in this hilarious production as the actors give this old time jewel new life. They act crazy, but do it in a clever and inventive way that needs no laugh track. The audience provides that. In this town everyone is funny. It's just too good to miss. Pick out your favorite public servant to laugh at. It's the rarest of things, when a play keeps you interested throughout. And this one is it.

When Gogol's classic political satire was first performed in Russia in 1836 the Tzar reportedly joked: "hmm, what a play! Gets at everyone and most of all at me!" This updated production uses music and physical theater to create an enormous and expansive theater experience. There is always a grotesque sense of fun to the characters.

The comic timing of the ensemble cast is amazing. There is a lot to do here – and everyone gave it their all. It is hard to single out any one actor because they were all geared up to bring us a nonstop fun ride all through all the twists and turns in this entertaining blowout from the Alistair Beaton Translated script (2005). Carey Perloff the Director had her hands full, but juggled things around to make this one of the most rewarding theater events this year.

AT THE AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATRE ON GEARY.

RATING: FOUR GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE!!!! (highest rating) –trademarked-