

From DallasVoice.com

Stage

Ladies of the evening

By Arnold Wayne Jones

Oct 2, 2008 - 5:21:56 PM

Mega-stars (in their own minds) Marjorie Keyes and Evelyn Rambeaux stoop to conquer in the world premiere of 'Pixie DeCosta' at Theatre Too

As Theatre Three planned its season for the smaller Theatre Too space, it was lucky enough to snag two important former stars, Marjorie Keyes and Evelyn Rambeaux, to star in "Pixie DeCosta." The new comedy is almost like a bastard cousin of "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane" written just for Evelyn and Marjorie by Dallas theater queen Bruce C. Coleman

Despite their star power, Madames Keyes and Rambeaux took time to sit down with the Dallas Voice, Coleman and their co-star, Paul Taylor, for a one-on-one — or rather, one-on-four — to discuss the show, their careers and ... no, that's about it.

Theatre Too, 2900 Routh St. Oct. 3–Nov. 2. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays–Saturdays at 8 p.m., weekend matinees at 2:30 p.m. \$20–\$30. 214-871-3300.



UNDERGROUND

GODDESSES: Evelyn

Rambeaux, left, and Marjorie Keyes, right, pose with director, Bruce C. Coleman.

Dallas Voice: Where did both of you get your starts?

Marjorie Keyes: Actually, at the age of 8, I created the role of Lil Pitty Pat in the musical "What's Eating the Donner Party?" for the Colorado Festival of Outdoor Dramas. My performance was so successful, I returned to the festival most summers for many years. It broke my heart when I could no longer perform there...

Q: What happened?

Evelyn Rambeaux: They asked her to leave. She was 57. Lil Pitty Pat had by now qualified for an AARP card.

MK: You have a little something stuck in your dental work, dear....

ER: You might say my big break came when I landed the recurring role of Nurse Kensett on the daytime drama, "Fertility Clinic." I scored quite a hit with the public!

MK: Yes, she was voted "most popular actress" by the Thrifty Nickel.

ER: Twice, dear... I love that paper.

MK: It's where I got my sofa.

ER: I was very nearly nominated for a daytime Emmy for that role.

MK: The way I was very nearly the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

ER: Impossible darling — Jesus' mother was a virgin. At least at one time.

Q: Bruce, how did you meet these women?

Bruce Coleman: I met Marjorie when she was arrested for a DWI and did her community service at Theatre Three. I came together with Evelyn through a chain letter she started.

Q: How did you get them to appear in Theatre Too?

BC: They weren't doing anything else. Evelyn was just recovering from an eyelash transplant.

MK: And I have always wanted to perform underground.

Q: Have the two of you ever worked together before?

MK: Actually, I don't remember ever having met Ms. Rambeaux prior to our first reading of "Pixie."

ER: Marjorie is quite the cut-up — we have known each other for more than 30 years.

MK: Now that you mention it, that pantsuit does look familiar.

ER: This outfit is new, dear.

MK: I'm certain it was in 1977. Evelyn still lives for the "Annie Hall" aesthetic — she's so loyal.

Q: Paul, describe your relationship with these stars.

Paul Taylor: Marjorie is actually from my hometown of Hutchison, Kansas. I belonged to a youth theater group there and she came in as a guest director. She did "Cabaret Jr." I played the M.C. She taught me to smoke and how to swallow a banana whole. I was 14. Evelyn I have worshiped ever since her saw her play Annie Sullivan in "Something in the Wah-Wah."

Q: Describe working with both.

PT: Marjorie is so brave — she'll do anything for a bit. She's a laugh whore, just like me. Evelyn makes me a little crazy — she never looks right into my eye, but only at my eyebrow.

ER: That's the only way I can remember my lines! I can't let your emotions get in the way of my acting.

MK: Waiter! Another Chivas please!

ER: Back to your question for me: I have shared the stage with this... with Ms. Keyes many times. We did a stint in “Dr. Happy’s Psychedelic Freakout” for Bobjack Carrillion at the Performance Cocoon — 12 performances a week, completely naked!

ER: Of course, that experience couldn’t last. Bobjack ended up asking Marjorie to leave.

MK: I have never....

ER: Her replacement was Alex Karras. You know, before “Webster.” It made an odd sort of sense....

MK: When I attended the St. Bernadine School for the Artistically Precocious, I played Willie Loman my senior year. The sisters wept.

ER: And Arthur Miller sued!

MK: It is so-o-o-o interesting that in a certain amount of light, you can still see an aging woman’s facial hair, no matter how much they may bleach. Evie, darling, you simply must let me recommend a good electrolysisist... or at least a decent vet!

Q: Bruce, what inspired you to write this show?

BC: I was in a sad place where I needed to laugh and decided to write a play. And it seemed appropriate for Halloween month. And I was inspired by a book I read about Charles Ludlam and his approach to theater. Since I was 11 years old, I have been a film history buff. There’s a lot of “Sunset Blvd.” in this place, and “Kiss Me Deadly,” “Whatever Happened to Baby Jane.” And I saw my first Busby Berkeley musical by the time I was 12, which tells you all you need to know about me.

Q: Do you enjoy playing sisters?

ER: Marjorie is giving a tour de force performance as Pixie! Really riveting! She is stretching every acting muscle she has. Her Pixie is slovenly, drunk, foul, licentious, completely inept and inappropriately and disgustingly lewd. My God, where does the character end and the actress begin?

MK: And Evelyn as Margot! She’ll walk away with all of the honors come awards season!

ER: It is a good part. Margot is loving, resourceful, forgiving, gracious, spiritual and deeply talented.

MK: You see? ACTING!

ER: Let me just say, I am expecting to see all of my fans opening night.

MK: Are they *both* in town?!

This article appeared in the Dallas Voice print edition October 3, 2008.

© Copyright by DallasVoice.com