

DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER By Marc Camoletti  
Theatre 3

Reviewed By Alex Hargis  
Associate Theatre Critic for John Garcia's THE COLUMN

The French have contributed some good things to our civilization. Who doesn't love crème brulee, French maid outfits, or the Pink Panther? And who would have guessed they'd have a flair for theatre too? After attending Theatre 3's production of Marc Camoletti's Don't Dress For Dinner, I now know we should start importing hilarious, side-splitting comedy from France much more often. This production, under the incredible direction of John McLean, will leave you spinning, bellyaching, and even swinging from the chandelier! Don't Dress For Dinner is a smart, fast-paced comedy of love triangles and deception that works flawlessly on all levels from cue one to the standing ovation.

This play, well written by Marc Comeltti and fabulously adapted by Robin Hawdon, is quite simple in plot. You take a couple that is expecting to be apart for the weekend, throw in their secret lovers, and then make them reunite without revealing who is getting it on with who, and you have an explosion of Noises Off antics meets Dangerous Liaisons on crack. This simplistic plot, although very funny, at times leaves you exhausted or jaded when a new love triangle pops up. You often find your head spinning trying to keep the different characters' stories straight, but the chaos of lies works wonderfully thanks to the fresh line deliveries and energetic performances by the dynamite cast.

Everyone at some point in the night stole the show. Jody Rudman, who played the uptight suburban wife/closet freak, was a perfect balance of naughty teacher meets June Cleaver. It was her presence and sense of authority that grounded much of the production, which played nicely against Ashley Wood's and Kimberly Condict's highly physical and zany performances. Both actors propelled the show time and time again, each taking their expert comedic skills and moving the action quickly from beat to beat.

During their "you're playing a dangerous game, Uncle" scene, Mr. Wood and Ms. Condict brought down the house. Daylon Walton, who played Bernard, was also a nice contrast to Mr. Wood and Ms. Condict, grounding many scenes with his Dapper Dan confidence and fortitude. Tricia Ponsford was adorable as Suzanne, Bernard's mistress whose only desire in life is to be appreciated and loved. Ms. Ponsford brought a good balance of vulnerability and sexy feistiness to the

role that often left her the most innocent character on the stage. And though his appearance comes late in the production, J. Rod Pannek plays a memorable, big-mouthed bruiser sure to make anyone quake in fear.

The technical elements in the show were expertly executed and did a phenomenal job of not hindering any of the action or the pacing. The set, designed by Jac Alder and David Walsh, was rustic, open, and extremely accommodating to working in the round. There was not a square inch of that set that wasn't utilized for playing space, including the reinforced chandelier that holds swinging actors and a chaise lounge that will never be looked at the same way again.

Amanda West' light design was beautifully simple, non intrusive, and wonderfully accented with vibrant purples and pinks. And the biggest surprise of the night went hands-down to Bruce Coleman's sexy costumes. His most notable creation, that made my jaw hit the floor, was a tacky French made outfit that, after a few pulls and tucks, transformed into a hot cocktail dress on stage in about ten seconds. This circus act of a live quick change stopped the entire show with a thunderous applause. How many costume designers can say that?

If you are looking for something rich that finishes nicely on your palette, or need to laugh after looking at your latest 401k earnings report, go see this show. Good theater has come to town via a French invasion.

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Runs through March 8

Performances are Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00pm, Saturdays at 2:30 & 8:00pm, and Sundays at 2:30 & 7:30pm

Tickets prices range from \$35.00 to \$40.00 and can be purchased online through Theatre 3's website, [www.theatre3dallas.com/](http://www.theatre3dallas.com/) or by calling the box office at 214.871.3300.

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