



Paul Taylor's dual roles a delight in Theatre Three's drag show 'Pixie DeCosta!'

11:55 PM CDT on Monday, October 6, 2008

By **LAWSON TAITTE** / The Dallas Morning News

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Drag shows about has-been movie stars are suddenly at the top of the charts. On Monday, just three days after Uptown Players opened its cross-dressing version of *Legends*, Theatre Three gave the world premiere of *Look What Happened to Pixie DeCosta!*.

Bruce R. Coleman wrote and directed the script for Theatre Three's basement space, Theatre Too. He robbed just about every old Hollywood script imaginable – including a good many musicals – to cobble together a story about two sisters who quite literally fell from favor at the height of their film careers in the 1930s. Margot DeCosta was the genteel Olivia de Havillan-type, whereas Pixie was the coarser, wilder one. Pixie's stardom was already threatened by her booze consumption before the terrible accident that confined them to their Sunset Boulevard penthouse for 25 years.

A prologue outlines the situation before a series of short flashbacks. A newsboy (Chad Peterson) wants us to read all about a grim massacre that has taken place in that penthouse. One of the victims, a housekeeper named Viddy (Phyllis Cicero), comes back from the beyond to fill the kid, and the audience, in on what led up to the latest tragedy.

A quick glimpse of the sisters' childhood (lifted shamelessly from *Gypsy*) establishes the roots of the intense sibling rivalry. Then we see the accident – or was it one? – before moving forward to the late 1950s. Margot and Pixie (both played by Paul Taylor) uncomfortably inhabit the penthouse together after their producers have hushed up the previous incident. Viddy is devoted to Margot but quarrels with Pixie.

Various other characters come in and out: Ted Wold is the flamboyant bachelor next door, Lisa Ann Haram a Louella Parsons-type gossip columnist, Steve Lovett a cop, and Rick Espaillat a screenwriter down on his luck. Mr. Espaillat has the funniest, and dirtiest, lines, but every scene has its double entendres and crafty allusions to speeches from famous movies.

Mr. Taylor achieves an easy grandeur as Margot. As Pixie he seems a bit overwrought at first, but eventually he becomes overwrought indeed, and that's one of the best things about the show. Although the plot is easy to figure out, its elements of horror manage to provoke some genuine frissons of fright.

For those who like the Theater of the Ridiculous writers like Charles Ludlam, *Look What Happened to Pixie DeCosta!* is a natural next step. Maybe it's a guilty pleasure, but it will have even the most resistant laughing a lot.

PLAN YOUR LIFE Through Nov. 2 at Theatre Three. Runs 135 mins. \$25 to \$30. 214-871-3300, www.theatre3dallas.com.