

REVIEW: The Hypochondriac unlike any show theatre audiences have seen before

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East Side Players ended their season with one of its most ambitious shows to date, *The Hypochondriac*, by the master of comedic theatre, Moliere.

Moliere was a playwright in the 1600s, who is known today for his comedies as Shakespeare is for his dramatic tragedies. This show is a modern adaptation written by Richard Bean set in Paris during the 1920s, and both the dialogue and the clothing reflect that time.

It's an outrageously funny show with over-the-top characters and some welcome shock value. It's about one man and his maladies, Argan (Daryn DeWalt), who is a hypochondriac and thinks he's ill all the time.

He's an eccentric man who scoots around on a custom wheelchair and relies on daily enemas, exotic potions and the attention of his family to make it through each day.

However, it soon becomes clear that with all his treatments, it's a frontal lobotomy he really needs, or perhaps some therapy.

His wife Beline (Valerie Abels), his daughter Angelique (Nicole Marie McCafferty) his brother Beralde (Chris Coculuzzi) and perhaps most of all, his nursemaid Toinette (Jane Hunter), are all tired of his neediness and each are suffering their own consequences because of it.

Angelique, who is in love with Cleante (Mathew Kovacs), is instead betrothed to a doctor, an awkward guy named Thomas (Stephen McLarty), so that Argan can have a doctor in the family. Beline is cheating on him and waiting for him to die, and Toinette has the worst of it as besides getting yelled at she also has to do daily inspections of his bowel movements.

If this sounds wild and weird, everything about this show is. The comedy ranges from farce to burlesque, even vaudeville, and may not be everyone's type of humour. But, it guarantees to offer up some serious laughs, especially in the second act where audiences will be privy to the most unlikely and unexpected scenes of hilarity.

The set, which can be described as fancy-futuristic, is beautiful and creatively done, and the props, like the portable wheelchair toilet and enema machine, are impressive.

The show is full of talented performers including DeWalt who shines as the ego-centric man-child who loves his



The Hypochondriac is unlike any theatre audiences have seen before. The East Side Players present *The Hypochondriac*, now on stage at The Papermill Theatre, 67 Pottery Rd., until June 9. Photo/JOHN MCQUEEN

diseases. He is funny, annoying and outlandish, perfect characteristics for this role.

Each performer in this show had their moment as scene stealers.

Kovacs as Cleante and McCafferty as Angelique have one of the funniest moments when they perform a made-up opera. Abels as Beline and Coculuzzi as Bonnefoi (he plays two roles) have an adult scene that you won't soon forget, and the scene where McLarty as Thomas and Chris Irving as his father Diafoirerhoea, are first introduced is also highly memorable and entertaining.

While this show is full of talented performers and colourful characters, the ultimate scene-stealer is Hunter as Toinette. Her comedic timing and mannerisms are spot-on and you will laugh at her continuously throughout the show.

This show is over-the-top, and whether or not this is your kind of humour, it is a unique and fast-paced comedy that promises to be unlike any theatre production you've seen before.

The Hypochondriac is onstage now until June 9 at 8 p.m., at The Papermill Theatre, 67 Pottery Rd. Tickets are \$20 and \$15 for students. For tickets, please call 416-425-0917 or visit www.eastsideplayers.ca

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