

By Susan Mulford

THROUGH November 11: *THE SALONNIÈRES*



Elainy Mata, Bill Mootos, Lisa Joyce, Laura Latreille, Sarah Newhouse. Photo Credit: Nile Scott Studios.

Male chauvinism and feminist empowerment quite creatively and with great humor do battle in Greater Boston Stage Company's World Premiere play by noted American Playwright Liz Duffy Adams (*A Fabulous Beast*, *The Reckless Ruthless*, *Dog Act*, *One Big Lie*, *The Listener*, *Or*). This colorful and highly engaging play has been created through the Don Fulton New Play Project (a gift from a longtime Stoneham resident and theatergoer, the now late, Don Fulton to support the production of new works). Directed by Weylin Symes, the story is a delightfully fun mix of fairy-tales, facades, and the French Feminist Revolution.

Set In Pre-Revolutionary Paris, a young Madeleine de Sauveterre, played by Elainy Mata, fresh out of the protection of the convent, is promised in marriage to the older, but still handsome Duc de la Beauchene played by Bill Mootos. An arrangement to pay off her father's debts is eventually expressed by the Duke when he coldly states, "I own her." Initially receiving the news of her fate, Madeleine flees to the 'literary salon' of her late mother's friends. The 'literary salon' was a place where aristocratic women could share their stories while concealing radical politics within reinvented folk tales. This one is hosted in the home of the wealthy widow, the Contesse de Mare (Laura Latreille). Accompanied by her friend the Marquise D'aulney (Sarah Newhouse) and attended by the maid, Francoise (Lisa Joyce), the play cleverly begins to challenge our initial perceptions of the motivation of each character.

As the last three women mentioned each spin a fairy tale, accented by delightfully imagined projected puppetry by Projection Designer, Christine A. Banna, we begin to wonder which of the three is Madeleine's fairy godmother, and which is the cruel stepmother? Is the Duke a Prince Charming or is he a Beast? And, is the maid just a maid, or the hero of a story none of them knows they are in.

This production is all brilliantly designed by scenic artist Katheryn Monthei within an elevated, and ultimately, a metaphorically symbolic gilded cage. The cast are robed in exquisite, seventeenth century costume designs by two-time Elliot Norton and two-time IRNE award winner Gail Astrid Buckley. Tickets for this enchanting and enlightening play may be obtained at www.greaterbostonstage.org.