

# OURO TOWN

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theatre pick

## Fanciful Illusion

"The Illusion" Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St., 677-4210.

By Mark Hall Amitin

It is a rare and lovely thing when a classic is done not only well but magnificently, as is the case with the new production of *The Illusion*.

All the pieces of the puzzle come together in a delightful mix, beginning with the ever so smart and elegant adaptation by Tony (Angels in America) Kushner. The text is filled with vibrant and whimsical language, rich in tone and hearty with romance.

The music, costumes, sets and lights would rival any Broadway show and exceed many. They are put to exceedingly good use under the masterful eye of director David Esbjornson, starting with a stalactite cave that nearly engulfs the audience.

Esbjornson milks from his performers a pithy brew, beginning with the charming and delightful Cynthia Nixon as our ravishing ingenue. Most of the actors are called upon to essay numerous roles, and they do so with pith and guile—including the guide for our journey, Rocco Sisto, as the magician Alacandre, and his Igor-like servant, Don Moran. Rob

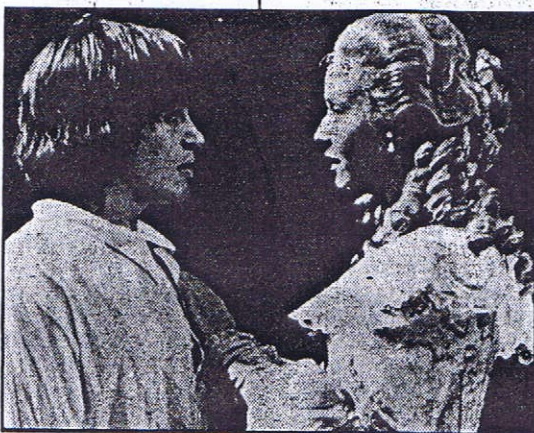
Campbell is our young hero, always in pursuit of love for love's sake. A sort of less angular Willem Dafoe, his aims are aptly aided by the twists and turns of the plot, which allow the scheming but lovely Lynn Hawley to nearly steal the show as maid to Ms. Nixon's mistresses. But the fop who runs off with the night is Metamore, whom the program refers to as "a lunatic" and rightfully so as, in the final scene, he aims to climb to the moon. Steve Mellor tackles this daunting task with a beguiling mellifluousness and the comic timing of Bill Irwin.

The story goes as follows: A father pines for his son, whom he has driven away some dozen years ago. He seeks out the cave of a magician reputed to have access to visions. Here we see revealed not one, but many lives that his lost son has lived: paramour, dolt, servant and adulterer. The father, while oft-confused by what he sees, is able to walk away unscathed in the end, despite his moments of longing.

What we discover as the tale unravels is a series of homilies and bromides, as filled with valor and truth as ever they were. We can be certain that our faithful playwright Mr. Kushner, has spiced the ale with some of his own updated observations, but they too are apt, such as when the wandering

son falls for a woman of means, he flatly states, "you have no idea what poverty can justify," and the magician's assertion that "obstacles are only obstacles until they are overcome."

This is an old-fashioned comique noir, part romp, a shade too dark as pure fairy tale, but providing ample amusement as an evening's entertainment. It is so rare to encounter a classic (Corneille's original play premiered in France in 1624) done with such verve and charm, it is quite the worthy experience.



Rob Campbell and Cynthia Nixon play the young lovers in *The Illusion*, adapted by Tony Kushner.