

THE BEVERLY HILLS OUTLOOK

A Biweekly Review of the Arts and Culture in Southern California

May 12, 2008

Theater



AURELIA'S ORATORIO

REVIEWED BY JOAN PINE

The stage at the Freud Theatre at UCLA was entirely bare except for a very large bureau sitting in the center of stage. First, a drawer is slowly opened from the inside and a graceful hand comes out, then another...and then...another! Now a leg, another leg with a high-heeled red shoe and then this wonderful waif face appears – smiling!

She is Aurelia Thierree, actress, dancer, acrobat, mime and granddaughter of the late Charlie Chaplin and great-granddaughter of Eugene O'Neill. But, no matter who her grandparents were, or even who her theatrical family is today, she is absolutely marvelous. As her lithe, acrobatic body climbs dramatically up a tilting red curtain or down a very long red ribbon, you watch with amazement and keep saying to yourself, "How does she do that?"

My very favorite sketch, among the many, was a lace-like curtain on the stage that she is performing behind in silhouette. In this piece, she is just knitting and knitting. Along comes a dog (also made of lace) and bites off her leg. Oh, no! All you see is shadow where the leg used to be. She then starts knitting furiously and quickly knits herself a new leg, then gets up and walks away. Well, you hadda be there.

Throughout her performance she does the unexpected. There is a chair carried by two bearers. She looks at it, and you immediately think that somehow she will hop onto the chair. But, no! She slides under the chair and shapes her body into the form of a chair. It was impressive.

Another skit I liked was when she set up a Punch and Judy type of puppet show, only here, the puppets were the audience. She now was the show with only her head on the puppet stage. She grabbed two pieces of cotton and formed them into

angel wings and put them on her ears. Slowly her head moved upwards and it looked like she was on her way to heaven. Her timing was always so precise that whatever she did became an "Oh My!" moment.

However, she wasn't always alone on the stage. Julio Monge, danced with her and an empty coat that kept running away from him. There was also another skit where Julio and Aurelia somehow wind up wearing one pair of pants and dance around the stage. Definitely, another stand-up and applaud moment.

Her mother, Victoria Thierree Chaplin, devised, directed and designed this stage production, plus worked on the sound design and the costumes. (Isn't that what all Moms do?).

This presentation is part of the UCLALive! series and, unfortunately, it only had a four-day run at the beginning of April. To see other shows in the UCLALive! series, call 310 825 2101 or check out www.uclalive.org