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## Theater Review: Antaeus Company's 'Peace in Our Time'

What if the Nazis had won the Battle of Britain?

By [Radomir Luza](#) [Email the author](#) | October 24, 2011

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About this column: Our art critics offer up reviews of local theatrical productions and musical performances.



Whether two or 200 casts of actors, the words of the playwright remain constant.

Nowhere is there a better example of this than [The Antaeus Company](#)'s production of Noel Coward's *Peace In Our Time* running through Dec. 11 at [Deaf West Theatre](#) in The NoHo Arts District. The adaptation, which has not been adapted in America in over 50 years, incorporates nine of Coward's lesser-known songs, resonates with themes that are still important today.

A fictionalized drama set in a South London pub called *The Shy Gazelle*, the play, written in 1946 and first staged in London in 1947, answers the question: What if the Nazis had won the Battle of Britain?

At once articulate, realistic and imposing, *Peace In Our Time* is an indictment of fascism, Nazism and the German mind-set from Adolph Hitler's rise to power in the mid-1930's to the end of the Second World War in 1945.

*It covers a five-year period from 1940 to 1945 in a pub filled with diverse characters such as artists, writers, working class Brits, young members of the Resistance and officers of the Third Reich.*

*At its heart, this is a play as much about London and the British “never-say-die” spirit as it is about the German occupation of Great Britain.*

*Coward compares the British and German political systems and philosophies and makes no qualms about championing the former and skewering the latter.*

*In language both authentic and genuine, he leaves little doubt as to which side of the political fence he occupies.*

*The playwright does not magnify political, social and cultural issues that are black and white, but gray. Coward skirts little in what may be his most inspirational yet tragic work.*

*The adaptation by Barry Creyton is seamless and powerful. It retains the strength and resonance of Coward’s message.*

*The direction by Casey Stangl is crisp, energetic and sensitive to the audience, performers and Coward’s play. It does not miss a beat. Nor does it want to.*

*This seldom-seen Coward effort is like a symphony with multiple overtures. It should not be fast-forwarded or rewound.*

*Given the current economic and political plight, the questions asked here are of the utmost significance and necessity.*

*Among the two casts (23 actors each) which is [an Antaeus trademark and tradition](#), pub owner Steve Hofvendahl (Fred Shattock), wife Lily Knight (Nora), daughter Danielle K. Jones (Doris) and son Jason Dechert (Stevie) shone in their courage, honesty and patriotism.*

*Jason Henning (Albrecht Richter) and JD Cullum (Chorley Bannister) proved funny, intelligent yet horribly bleak.*

*But it is Raleigh Holmes (Lyia Vivian) who stole the first Saturday evening performance with singing ripped from the soul and acting stolen from the heart.*

*The first Sunday matinee showcased the passion of Rebekah Tripp (Janet Braid) the chameleon-like Bill Brochtrup (Bannister), the courage of Abby Wilde (Doris) the deftness of Rob Nagle (Richter) and the chanteuse-like gift of Rebecca Mozo (Vivian).*

*It also must be said that the audience was the most mature and vocal that this critic has experienced this year.*

*Both ensembles were furiously aided by the musical direction of Richard Levinson, the scenic design of Tom Buderwitz, costume design of Jessica Olson, sound design of John Zalewski and lighting design of Jeremy Pivnick.*

*In the end, Coward hits a home run out of the park by giving us fiction sincerely inspired and informed by reality.*

*“London Pride” truly is unique in all the world.*

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