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Review: Antaeus' 'The Liar' full of desire, pursuits, untruths

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A compulsive liar (Nick D'Agosto) pursues a lass (Kate Maher) with gusto, observed by her maid (Gigi Bermingham), who adds flirty chaos to the program. (Geoffrey Wade / Los Angeles Times)

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By Philip Brandes
October 15, 2013 | 12:22 p.m.



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Though David Ives is known for wit that's bold, "The Liar's" something special, truth be told. Adapting antique farce by Pete Corneille in vernacular of the present day, complete with pentametric verse in rhyme, the writing's surely worthy of our time. Performed with skill by pros at Antaeus, its L.A. premiere has much to please us.

O'erflowing with surfeit of talent vast, the show as usual is double-cast (which makes reviewing problematical enough to wish for a sabbatical). Take solace that the troupe's consistency should make all actor mash-ups fun to see.

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In an upper class romantic tangle, under direction by Casey Stangl, Nicholas D'Agosto and Rob Nagle were the plucky stars I saw finagle—as cocky pathological liar, and servant whose love of truth aims higher—to woo Jules Willcox' fair lass and Gigi Bermingham's flirty maid, respectively.

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As the dissembling swain's untruths compound, enjoy as they amusingly confound his papa (played by Peter Van Norden) and pal (Bo Foxworth) in turns both golden. But complications naturally ensue when mistaken ID makes him pursue the wrong girl, so his overtures entrap the funny, bewildered Joanna Strapp.

Since the script's a classic-modern hybrid, the style could go hip or period. Angela Balogh Calin's costumes rock, although their moody goth look seems ad hoc, obliging only further to abet Keith Mitchell's severely minimal set. While I liked the gusy visual curve, Ives' playful spirit could be better served.

Another dubious predilection—pounding meter over natural diction—at times way overstates the obvious; we get the point: The verse is humorous. In this regard it's males who fare the worst, the gals all lead in characters immersed. Yet this trend is not altogether fool—on this stage, as in life, the women rule.

"The Liar," Antaeus Theater, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays. Ends Dec. 1. \$30-\$34. (818) 506-1983 or www.antaeus.org. Running time: 2 hours, 20 minutes.

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