

Peace

(Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman Theater at the Getty Villa, Los Angeles; 400 seats; \$42 top)

A Getty Villa presentation of a play in one act by Aristophanes, adapted by John Glore, Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas and Herbert Siguenza. Directed by Bill Rauch. Musical director, Suzanne Garcia. Choreography, Ken Roht. Sets, Christopher Acebo; costumes, Shigeru Yaji; lighting, Geoff Korf; puppets, Lynn Jeffries; production stage manager, Darlene Miyakawa. Opened, reviewed Sept. 9, 2009. Runs through Oct. 3. Running time: 1 HOUR, 30 MIN.

First Slave (Lincoln) Richard Montoya
 Second Slave (Edween) Ric Salinas
 Third Slave (Dooglas) Herbert Siguenza
 Tygaeus, known as Ty Dye John Fleck
 Chorus Leader Amy Hill
 With: Las Colibri.

By BOB VERINI

For one month, Latino comedy rascals Culture Clash transform the Getty Villa into the Getty Pancho Villa for their exuberant musical satire "Peace," Aristophanes' ancient (421 B.C.) antiwar tract rendered as timely as this morning's headlines. If you like your summer entertainment with a milewide raunchy streak, a little food for thought and a lot of heart, give "Peace" a chance.

Modern versions of Aristophanes are nothing new. You can't walk without tripping over a "Lysistrata" someplace, and in 2004, Nathan Lane adapted Stephen Sondheim's lagoon musical "The Frogs" into a stinging indictment of Bush administration policies.

But this "Peace," co-scripted by John Glore, stands apart in its unabashed commitment to the Greek Old Comedy total-theater experience.

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Legit Reviews

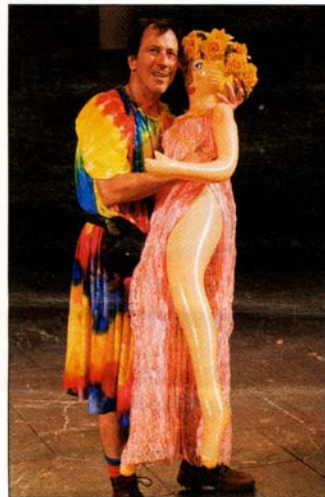
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here taking in circus technique, puppetry and a strolling mariachi band (exquisite musicianship from Suzanne Garcia and Las Colibri). The dialogue is studded with outrageous puns, snarky wordplay and scattershot contempo references to everyone from Barack Obama to Susan Boyle.

It's all true to Aristophanes and in line with the time-tested Culture Clash aesthetic, right down to the site-specific jibes at Echo Park, Koreatown and the Westside. (Even the UCLA/USC rivalry is invoked, and Trojans be warned, you get the worse of it.)

And they work blue. Oy, do they work blue. After 10 minutes of scat jokes and giant balloon phalluses popping out from under every toga, you may think no one's ever worked



John Fleck's hemp grower Ty Dye takes on the gods in "Peace."



Slaves Herbert Siguenza and Ric Salinas sit in trash in Culture Clash's giddy musical adaptation of Aristophanes' "Peace" at the Getty Villa.

blue like this show works blue. And risky too, in the little white genitalia attached to a Michael Jackson look-alike. Too soon? Not for the Getty; kudos to all concerned for having the guts to play this material as close to the edge as Aristophanes demanded.

For all that, the uproarious antics lack neither point nor sting. The plot engine is a giant dung beetle that farmer Tygaeus (funny, earnest John Fleck) rides to Mt. Olympus to damn the gods for their indifference to Earth's debilitating, decade-long war. Sound familiar?

That he's a hemp grower nicknamed Ty Dye, with his beetle sporting a VW grille, doesn't diminish the power of his quest to free the Goddess Peace from cruel War's fetters. (War himself is scintillatingly impersonated by Clasher Richard Montoya within Lynn Jeffries' giant puppet body, adorned with an Iron Man helmet and relics of slaughter.)

Ty gets sterling support from his Culture Clash pals in scores of roles,

never channeling the Three Stooges more than here. (They're darned good Marx Brothers, too.) The redoubtable Amy Hill pops in as a Malibu neighbor complaining about the noise — in last year's Villa "Agamemnon," she whines, Tyne Daly's voice killed her prize geraniums — and staying to undo the beast of war in his lair.

Most productions of classical comedy meander, but "Peace" remains tight as helmer Bill Rauch attends to the emotional stakes. By playing War's conquering the world as an imminent and terrifying possibility, he sets a clock ticking ominously beneath the increasingly outlandish shenanigans.

And while all ends happily in a trio of unconventional marriages smiting Prop. 8 with a broadsword, it doesn't end goofily. As in "Water and Power," their weightiest dramatic experiment to date, Culture Clash invokes the younger generation as the answer to seemingly inevitable adult folly. The appearance of an undersized deus ex machina, like the beautiful smiles of Las Colibri, lends an air of grace honoring the show's theme without belying all the fun that's come before.