

“Lady Into Fox” Paints a Delicate, Powerful Myth | Theatre Ghost

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This is a very small, quiet play. Three actors, a spare stage with two Persian rugs and four lamps, and pillows for us to sit on. (Or chairs, if you prefer.)

The actors begin by recalling ancient myths and suggesting that though the gods have gone, miraculous events still insist on occurring. They offer to share the tale of one such event, and then slip into their characters.

Within moments, the miraculous event occurs. With no buildup, no warning, the story world we’ve entered with them alters abruptly. And we spend the next hour with them living through its unfolding repercussions.



Nathan Turner, Claire Kaplan (photo: Sam Atkin)

Like the painting on a Japanese tea set, or a Greek vase, the play very simply and delicately takes us into the presence of the divine.

In this case, we meet divinity's terrible power — those sudden, immense changes that erupt into our lives like earthquakes, or descend upon them like lightning.

One of the great beauties of *Lady Into Fox* is that it focuses not on the event but on its long aftermath. We are thus gently led to realize that adjusting to a cataclysm never stops. We never reach stasis. Whatever new arrangement we may manage, we will continue changing and evolving, whether we wish to or not.

Another of this play's great beauties is the performers' sheer artistry. Each uses precise, simple gestures and sounds, without props or costumes; only gradually do we appreciate the intense, demanding physicality of their work.

The lady in question, for example, does turn into a fox; but that's no spoiler. Because until you see Claire Kaplan accomplish that transformation (and the evolutions afterward) you know nothing.

I can say her performance is entrancing, lyrical, and accurate; breathtaking, witty, and heartbreaking; and I do. But like the vase that inspired Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, you must see the thing itself to understand. Nathan Turner's attempts to partner her, by turns diffident and frantic, are a nearly equal achievement.

The play's other beauties include the clean, focused writing and directing by Sam Hunter, who led the company in adapting it for the stage from a 1922 novella. The members of this ensemble — Kaplan, Hunter, Turner, Spencer Devlin Howard and designer Leland Montgomery — have been together, off and on, for several years. It shows in their constant mutual awareness, in the seeming ease with which they follow each other's rhythms.

Lady Into Fox, like an ancient myth, tells an improbable story that we nonetheless believe — not because we care about its literal truth, but because it resonates within us. The artists do not stop to explore any of these resonances; they keep moving, with steady grace. Echoes and possible parallels to our lives accumulate, but we must ponder them later. Or see the show again.

Fortunately, after the acclaimed premiere at the 2015 Hollywood Fringe Festival, the troupe has agreed to perform *Lady Into Fox* whenever and wherever booking opportunities arise. That means four more local performances in December (details below). Go.

You couldn't give yourself – or someone you love – a better gift.

Lady Into Fox, by David Garnett, adapted by Sam Hunter and the company, directed by Sam Hunter.

Presented by The Interrobang Departure.

Dec. 10 and 17, at 8:00 –

Echo Theater Company , 3269 Casitas Ave., Atwater Village.

Dec. 11, at 8:00 –

Lyric-Hyperion Theatre, 2106 Hyperion Ave., Silver Lake.

Dec. 13, at 8:30 –

Angel City Brewery, 216 N. Alameda St., LA.

Tickets: At the door.