



Constellations at the Centaur

Description

Play challenges our place in time and space



pay attention to plays that revolve around the laws of Physics, be

Thus, I was delighted by Nick Payne's hit play *Constellations*, in



which human relations literally rotate between momentary differences in chance vibrations of nuclei and electrons. Mr Payne denies that he has any special scientific background. Michael Frayn, author of the long run Broadway hit *Copenhagen*, (done at Centaur in 2003) also denied such expertise even though that play discusses quantum mechanics as the backdrop between a cat and mouse discussion between Danish great Niels Bohr and Nazi German questioner Werner Heisenberg, who invented the concept.

The only other play I recall diving directly into the subject of simultaneous “multiverses” is Canadian John Mighton’s *Possible Worlds*, later made into a film with ex-Montrealer Rick Miller.

In the meantime, the closest to Einstein’s themes of time and space being a continuum turning into itself – and thus no beginning and no end – can be seen in an hour long TV show narrated by Peter Ustinov. What would Aristotle make of this – he who declared that a proper play must have a beginning, a middle and an end? Guess he’s literally old school by a few thousand years.

Better yet, and closest to the essence of *Constellations*, is the humorous 1975 paperback cult classic *Space Time and Beyond* by cartoonist Bob Toben in conversation with physicists Fred A. Wolf and Jack Sarfatti .

The cast that director Peter Hinton has assembled couldn’t be better. Graham Cuthbertson, a Centaur favourite and *Food for Thought* alum, is here as Roland, a down to earth bee keeper who (and Festival alumna Cara Ricketts), a university researcher into quantum physics. The play’s late voices that may not have needed the nearly invisible mikes passages a more unearthly quality.



The play has no written stage settings or directions so Mr Hinton



was cleverly in his creative element.

The whole was played out on a large revolving disc as the twosome enacted several repeats of their meetings, arguments or attractions, each rep slightly or more modified by, I guess, chance variations in the universal Matrix. In this respect, it disagrees with Einstein's refusal to believe that "God plays dice with the Universe".

A gentle release of fog (or mist?) was a nice touch as was a giant balloon globe behind a thousand points of light from distant stars above and beyond.

Jan Chan's strumming of her cello in the background added an appropriate chord to the text, giving a subliminal music of the spheres meaning to "string theory".

Subtle shifts of emphasis on tone of syllables by the actors, as well as minor body movements enriched their delivery. At one time, a scene was played with no talk, just deaf hand language. Why? Well, you'll have to go see this enjoyable 80-minute gem.

Be sure to read the unaccredited short but telling interview with the playwright in the printed program, presumably penned by PR pro Barbara Ford.

Constellations continues at the Centaur until October 30.

More information and tickets at 514 288-3161 or go to centaurtheatre.com

Images: Andrée Lanthier

Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club.

Category

1. Review

Tags

1. Byron Toben
2. Centaur Theatre Company
3. Constellations
4. play

Date Created

October 2016