

THE POETRY OF PIZZA

By Deborah Brevoort

Virginia Stage Company

February 26-March 16, 2008

Tickets call (757) 627-1234

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

The bed room or sex farce has pretty much vanished from the stage and taken up residence on television. These naughty but nice plays used to be bread and butter for boulevard theatre. The characters had innocence in their roguery and a subtlety lacking in most of the shows we see on the tube.

Playwright Brevoort's often quite funny farce reminded me of the wacky work of the French writer Georges Feydeau. He unearthed about every comic device one can think of. One of his plays takes place in a hotel with beds that revolve from one room to the next. In Brevoort's opus, the ambience for a farce is set by a delightful non-realistic style that allows the action to unfold with necessary rapidity. In addition there is a Harlem Globe Trotters type running gag with Pizza boxes that brilliantly replaces Feydeau's beds. Rightly so, The action takes place in a Pizza Parlor in Copenhagen after all.

As you might suspect, the pizzeria is run by two Kurdish refugees, done to perfection by Barzin Akhavan and Gregor Paslawsky. The former is a creative pizza designer with a keen sense of the erotic in his creations. A somewhat too bookish but attractive professor, played neatly by Denise Cormier, comes to Copenhagen from America for a year's residency at a local university. She is soon on three gentlemen's, shall we say, "to do" lists. It is Soran Saleen, Mr. Akhavan's role, who is truly in love with her. John FitzGibbon is amusing as number two as is Joel King as number three. Two ladies, Maria Cellario and Susan Greenhill, who only know each other over the telephone are interlocutors of the proceedings. Both are entertaining but Greenhill is especially so. Pam Adams also contributes to the merriment.

The play does have some soggy times, mainly at the end of the first act. The falling in love scene with professor Sara and Soran seems too long and loses the style that works so well during most of the production. The quite fine farcical direction by Patrick Mullins seems to abruptly shift into comedy grounded in reality that doesn't work as well.

A. Nelson Ruger IV has come up with a very elaborate set the like of which we don't see in American pizza joints.

Over all, you get a good slice of fun with lots of delectable toppings in this fast food paced romp of purple passion pizza.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.