

Gia On The Move  
Curating Culture

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## Antaeus X Inge: A “Picnic” of Desire

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by Tracey Paleo, Gia On The Move



Daniel Bess, Jordan Monaghan

photo by Karianne Flaathen

For over a week I’ve been passing around Antaeus Theatre Company’s “shirtless actor” *Picnic* promo to the delight of most of my social media followers & fans except for a single male Twitter troll who attacked me in the middle of the night, angry and offended by my promoting guys in shape amongst other things.

Needless to say, I was inspired to immediately and unapologetically ramp up my no holds barred shirtless campaign. Certainly, if Helen Potts doesn’t mind (at all) sneaking a glance at a seeming physically perfect Hal Carter traipse around her backyard half-naked while doing odd jobs, why should I. It really is best to have a sense of humor when humor is presented and tastefully so.

Now, that I’ve had time to take in my first-hand experience of sitting in the theatre watching the Antaeus “Stuffed Peppers” cast bring to life this most wonderful work by playwright William Inge, it is thoroughly exciting to be able to say, that past the “pretty” of the players, it’s a darn good show!

If ever you've been to Antaeus' current home in North Hollywood, what is immediately striking is the physical transformation that has taken place within the space itself. Noticeably the set nearly mimics the original 1953 Broadway production and is so beautifully designed, front row benches included.

Director Cameron Watson has meticulously illuminated Inge's play set in 1952 small town Kansas, including casting a wiry and sexually potent Daniel Bess as Hal Carter and a mostly femme fatal Jordan Monaghan as Madge Owens. There is no shortage of chemistry between the pair and although Ms. Monaghan plays a slightly reserved Madge, once the two dance, the match is lit and the show gets hot to the touch.

It is Gigi Birmingham as the almost old maid school teacher, Rosemary Sydney, however, who really brings the fire and flame to this production. From the moment she steps on to the porch it is an aggressive, near sexual wilding of Hal as she eventually unleashes her pointed envy of his youth, his looseness, his attraction to Madge and most of all her fears about growing older year after year, unmarried, and being desired less and less as a women.

Connor Kelly-Eiding also shines up as smart, tomboy younger sister Millie Owens with a spot on performance.

The Stuffed Peppers cast which also includes a flawless Kitty Swink as the downtrodden, yet wiser than apparent Helen Potts looking for small happinesses, Eve Gordon in an almost contemporary Flo Owens, Ross Philips perfectly period cast as jealous boyfriend Alan Seymour, John DeMita also perfectly cast as the reluctant beau to Miss Sydney, and Tamara Krinsky (Irma Cronkite), Maureen Lee Lenker (Christine Schoenwalder) and Ben Horowitz (Bomber), pull together a free-flowing, fast-moving *Picnic* that results in an arousing presentation of volcanic frustration and smoldering desire.

EXTENDED THROUGH AUGUST 30, 2015

It's a balmy Labor Day in the American Heartland, and a group of women are preparing for a picnic... but they'll have to lay a lot on the line before they can lay out the checkered cloths. When a handsome young drifter named Hal arrives, his combination of uncouth manners and titillating charm sends the women reeling, especially the beautiful Madge. When Hal is forced out of town, Madge must decide whether their fleeting encounter is worth changing the course of her life. Winner of the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.

Written by **William Inge**

Directed by **Cameron Watson**

Starring (in alphabetical order including both alternate casts) **Rhonda Aldrich, Gigi Bermingham, Daniel Bess, Jake Borelli, Josh Clark, Jason Dechert, John DeMita, Matthew Gallenstein, Eve Gordon, Sarah Halford, Shannon Holt, Ben Horwitz, Dylan Jones, Connor Kelly-Eiding, Tamara Krinsky, Maureen Lee Lenker, Jill Maglione, Jordan Monaghan, Ross Philips, Jackie Preciado, Janellen Steininger, Kitty Swink**

Presented by **Antaeus Theatre Company**

**Thursdays at 8 p.m.: Aug. 13, 20, 27**

**Fridays at 8 p.m.: Aug. 14, 21, 28**

**Saturdays at 2 p.m.: Aug. 15, 22, 29**

**Saturdays at 8 p.m.: Aug. 15, 22, 29**

**Sundays at 2 p.m.: Aug. 16, 23, 30**

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5112 Lankershim Blvd.  
North Hollywood CA, 91601  
*(1½ blocks south of Magnolia)*

**PARKING:**

\$8 in the lot at 5125 Lankershim Blvd. (west side of the street), just south of Magnolia.

**HOW:**

(818) 506-1983 or [www.Antaeus.org](http://www.Antaeus.org)

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**TICKET PRICES:**

Thursdays and Fridays: **\$30**

Saturdays and Sundays: **\$34**

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