

Good Greek! *Why the Scot?* A stag *Electra* and a *Macbeth* with a nebulous point, reviewed by STEVEN MIKULAN.

STYLE

Pomo power: SEVEN McDONALD gets eclectic with designer Stacy Kiehl.

MUSIC

Triple Echo: An expression of the inexpressible — Blonde Redhead. BY JOHN PAYNE

Never mind the boat: Prog and punk shake hands with the Walkmen, Secret Machines, TV on the Radio, 90-Day Men. BY ALEC HANLEY BEMIS

The mighty wind of **Amps for Christ.** BY DANIEL CHAMBERLIN

Live in L.A.: Yeah Yeah Yeahs; John Frusciante; Jeff Gauthier and Crossings.

A Lot of Night Music: Steven Stucky's polygot pleasures. BY ALAN RICH

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COMICS

"BEK," BY BRUCE ERIC KAPLAN

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La 27th, the best *nacatamales* around. BY JONATHAN GOLD

ASK MR. GOLD

In search of *khao soi*. BY JONATHAN GOLD

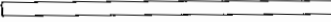
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the satirical and the lugubrious, the production takes on the tone of Williams' autobiographical *The Two Character Play* (about two actor-siblings trapped in a theater), which is no joke at all. It's as though director Andy Robinson can't locate Chekhov's delicate intersection of parody and pathos, so he tosses out his Russian map and replaces it with an American one, where he may be on the wrong continent but at least he can read the atlas.

The essence of Russian vaudeville is summed up in a scene created by the late actor Alexander Lebedev in the early 1980s. It's still replayed on Russian TV's Culture Channel, and it's hard to find a Russian who can finish describing it without bursting into laughter. It's a mostly visual gag about a professional thief who awakens for breakfast so hung-over that he's speechless and needs a shot of vodka to soothe his migraine. Problem is, even when he's finally able to pour a glassful from the bottle, because of his severe shakes, he can't get the shot glass to his lips before dumping the liquid onto the floor. His contemptuous wife refuses to assist, so he contrives an elaborate cranelike mechanism from a kitchen towel, which he uses as a sling/hoist connected between the shot glass in his right hand, and looped over his shoulder to his left hand. It's a 10-minute skit that culminates in the moment of victory when the liquid hits his system, he regains his speech and he belittles his wife for having no class.

Director Sabin Epstein taps this same confluence of physical humor and cultural Zeitgeist in his staging of Chekhov's *The Proposal*. An aging bachelor landowner named Lomov (Gross) arrives all puffed up at the home of his neighbor Chubukov (Martin Ferrero) to ask for his daughter's (Emily Bergl) hand in marriage. Chubukov retires to leave the two lovebirds in peace, but their wooing instantly flares into a squabble over which family actually owns the meadow behind the fence. As his fury rises, Lomov struggles to contain his own failing health — heart palpitations and a loss of feeling in his legs and arms. He screams abuse then instantly clutches his chest and collapses on the divan — a graduate of the "Look What You Made Me Do" school of psychology. Gross' is a magnificent cameo that conjures the spirit of Lebedev with deep roots in the goofy geometry of Russian folk humor, while Bergl spits fire perfectly in return.

By the time this brand of comedy got to the Catskills from the Ukraine, its Old World cultural and psychological essences were being flattened and propelled by comparatively deflective jokes and one-liners, prepping the genre for radio comedies, variety shows and sitcoms. Curiously, where American dramas are more confessional than Russian, American comedies tend to stake out a greater distance between a joke and the pain that underlies it.

The main joke in Chekhov's *The Anniversary* comes from a complaint lodged by a *babushka* (Anne Gee Byrd) to a bank director (John Apicella) that he owes her husband money. Naturally, she wanders into the bank just as the board of directors