

VARIETY®

Regional

Tonight at 8:30 (Part 2 -- Come the Wild)

(Deaf West Theater; 60 seats; \$30 top)

By TERRY MORGAN

An Antaeus Company presentation of four one-act plays by Noel Coward. Directed by Stefan Novinski, Robert Goldsby, Stephanie Shroyer, Brendon Fox.

George/Johnnie/Richard - JD Cullum, Lily/Dolly/Emily - Gigi Bermingham, Alf/Stanley - Ramon DeOcampo
Bert/Burrows - Philip Proctor, Mr. Edwards/Jasper - Robert Pine, Mabel/Mrs. Rockett - Angela Paton
Elsie/Mildred - Emily Eiden, Doris/Harriet - Laura Wernette, Henry/Albert/Charles - Josh Clark, Laura/Jane - Shannon Holt, Myrtle - Anne Gee Byrd, Beryl - Angela Goethals, Alec/Edward - Mirron Willis, Bill - Ryan Spahn, Lavinia - Amelia White

The second part of the Antaeus Company's ambitious production of Noel Coward's series of one-act plays is even better than the first. The stories run the gamut -- sharp-edged backstage comedy, stirring romantic drama, the joy of a man abandoning his rotten family, an oddly cheerful funeral wake -- in a demonstration that Coward was a more versatile playwright than he's generally given credit for, and a surprisingly modern one at that. Four directors elicit superb work from an excellent (double-cast) ensemble.



JD Cullum and Gigi Bermingham star in "Red Peppers," one of four one-acts in Noel Coward's "Tonight at 8:30" at the Deaf West Theatre.

In "Red Peppers," the married couple of George (JD Cullum) and Lily (Gigi Bermingham) are a comedy team performing at a provincial British theater. Polished onstage, behind the scenes they're a mess, the downward trajectory of their careers souring their partnership. When others attack them, they become a united front, and harmony is temporarily restored.

"Fumed Oak" follows a day in the life of the Gow family, as angry wife Doris (Laura Wernette) and her mother, Mrs. Rockett (Angela Paton), accuse and complain at each other as teenage daughter Elsie (Emily Eiden) whines. Long-suffering husband Henry (Josh Clark) seems oblivious, until that evening when he tells them abruptly he's leaving for good, but, before he goes, he intends to tell them what he thinks of them all.

"Still Life," (which was adapted into David Lean's classic film "Brief Encounter") concerns the short but intense love affair between Laura (Shannon Holt) and Alec (Mirron Willis), two married people who meet by chance in a railway station cafe. At first content to be friends, the couple falls passionately for each other. But the guilt from betraying her marriage becomes too much for Laura to bear, and the relationship -- likely the most important one of their lives -- must end.

"Family Album" takes place at a funeral wake. The patriarch of the Gilpin family has died, and his adult children and their husbands and wives are gathered to mark the occasion. Jasper (Robert Pine) isn't feeling particularly glum, however, reminding