

Monday, June 30, 2008



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AMERICAN TALES

For these one-act musicals, writer-adapter Ken Stone and composer Jan Powell turn to great names in American literature: Mark Twain's rollicking *The Loves of Alonzo Fitz Clarence and Rosannah Ethelton* and Herman Melville's enigmatic *Bartleby the Scrivener*. In Twain's tale, set in the early days of the telephone, feckless Alonzo (Daniel Blinkoff) attempts to call his aunt in Baltimore but somehow reaches Rosannah (Devon Sovari), in San Francisco. The two fall in love via long distance, but their romantic idyll is disrupted by her treacherous rejected suitor, Burley (Rafael Sbarge). The piece is a delicious, highly stylized comic trifle, with lilting songs that evoke and mock the music of the 1890s. *Bartleby* centers on the mild-mannered copy clerk (Sbarge), who refuses to either work or be fired for intransigence, replying simply, "I would prefer not to." The adapters cleverly expand Melville's brief tale, and Sbarge and Peter Van Norden, as his bemused employer, perform it skillfully. Kay Cole and Thor Steingraber direct with wit and dispatch on set designer Laura Fine Hawkes' fragmented map of the U.S., and A. Jeffrey Schoenberg supplies handsome period costumes, with fine musical direction by Steven Ladd Jones and Billy Thompson. Deaf West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., N. Hlywd.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 3 & 7:30 p.m.; thru Aug. 10. (866) 811-4111 or www.antaeus.org.

An Antaeus Company production.
(Neal Weaver)