

### WHAT THE CRITICS SAY ABOUT US

#### **Light Up the Sky**

"If you love theater, this "Sky" is the limit, a lovingly crafted valentine flocked with plenty of glitz, glitter and period panache." --Los Angeles Times

"...this top notch production... terrific ensemble...brilliant comedy farce..." --Back Stage West

"...the quintessential backstage tale...crackles with wit and wise-cracks and the laughter is near-constant." --LA Weekly

#### **Frank Zappa's Joe's Garage**

"...the effect is signature Zappa, balancing brilliant arrangements that manage to be at once dissonant and melodic with a satirical use of shock value." --Rolling Stone

"This is one of the most inventive and important musical productions of the year." --Entertainment Today

"A must see for rock and roll fans." --Variety

"I hate theater, but this was pretty good." --Dweezil Zappa

#### **deLEARious**

"...the concept is so clever, the skewering of modern theatre making so precise, and the Biblical linguistic games so adroitly played, this is no mere pastiche. It borders on genius." --Back Stage West

"Theater mavens may well devour deLEARious..." --Los Angeles Times

"These two interweaving plots show some absurd comic bravado."--LA Weekly

#### **Comedy of Errors**

"Open Fist's production of William Shakespeare's The Comedy Of Errors may be the most fun I've ever had at a Shakespeare play..." --LA Stage Scene

"...West and his energetic cast revel in their romp." --Los Angeles Times

#### **Blue Night in the Heart of the West**

"This theatrical spectacle of a play is a terrific evening in the theater." --Larchmont Chronicle

"Beautifully acted under Amanda Weier's direction." LA Weekly

"...visually inventive staging unleashes a skilled cast... on a splendidly atmospheric set." Los Angeles Times

#### **The Dead**

"Bottom Line: The Tony award-winning musical is in good hands." --Hollywood Reporter

"If this show is any indication, this company may be the best of the best of small theatre in Los Angeles." --Los Angeles Times (Reader Review)

"The Open Fist Theatre is giving the show a terrific revival." --blogcritics

### **Eenie Meanie**

Teresa Willis is attuned to her times — our times — with an insight like perfect pitch, and she has crafted a fine stage presence to tell us about it.” --Cincinnati City Beat Review

### **Do Do Love**

“Director Mimi Savage plumbs every laugh in this stylish, brisk staging, while her richly naturalistic performers delve beneath the obvious eccentricities of their characters.... --Los Angeles Times

“...skillfully blends quirky humor with moments of real poignancy.” --LA Stage Scene

### **Idiot Box**

“The Open Fist Theater Company's West Coast premiere production of this witty, audacious work succeeds brilliantly.” --Variety

“The Idiot Box is LA theater at its best. Its amazing ensemble cast proves that no city can hold a candle to LA for excellence in acting.” --LA Stage Scene

“The Idiot Box is one of the most intriguing artistic forays into the darker corners of the American psyche either before or after 2001.” --Jewish Journal

“Elyanow’s intelligently crafted script is rife with humor and irony, and is superbly augmented by Jeremy B. Cohen’s perceptive direction of the fine cast.” --LA Weekly

### **Travesties**

“I love this script. I love that a company had the courage to stage it. I say... make reservations!” Back Stage West

“...hilariously zany intellectual blitzkrieg.” --LA Weekly

### **Beautiful City**

Open Fist brings its usual excellent production values to the play. They bring an interesting range of both foreign and domestic theater to the Los Angeles scene which should be nurtured.” --CurtainUp

“Martha Demson's first-rate cast....” --TheaterMania

### **Autobahn**

“Open Fist Theater Company's superb West Coast premiere presentation sees an excellent ensemble putting the pedal to the metal.” --Variety

“Weier’s excellent staging shows his creation for all its beautiful ambiguities.” --Theater Times

### **Time of Your Life**

“That this esteemed troupe acquits itself with an impressive production doubles the delight.” --Critics Forum

“Open Fist's appealing production makes terrific use of the company's new home...” -- Los Angeles Times

### **The Threepenny Opera**

“Musically, intellectually, and theatrically, director R. Charles Otte’s production is a spellbinding entertainment.... The ensemble is flawless...This shimmering production, Open Fist’s last in its Hollywood facility, should not be missed.” --Back Stage West

“The company is grand...the event is downright glorious” -- LA Weekly

"This is a spectacular revival of a true 20<sup>th</sup> Century masterpiece" --reviewplays.com and Entertainment Weekly

### **Speaking in Tongues**

"...directed by actor Stephen Spinella, in his first production....an exact relationship exists between Spinella's precise blocking and Jeff Rack's equally spare set...If we haven't talked enough about how spectacular the acting is, it's just because you'll have to see it for yourself." --laist.com

"Like a good music conductor, director Stephen Spinella not only trusts the audience to stay with the piece...but also makes sure his actors revel in the pacing no matter the speed." Back Stage West  
"What's guaranteed is excellent acting and a complex script that challenges the audience's way of thinking. Go see Speaking in Tongues." --Maestro-Arts and Reviews

### **PAPA**

"In this near-perfect fusion of actor and material, Sparks is unfailingly brilliant, capturing the vulnerability under the bluster of a genius in sad but valiant decline. Sparks' Hemingway doesn't just whistle in the dark, he sallies into it like a one-man brass band, hot on the heels of the final adventure..." --Los Angeles Times

"Under Martha Demson's direction, Sparks' Hemingway is a brawling, profane and surprisingly likeable Hemingway..." --LA Weekly

### **The Chekhov Machine**

"Florinel Fatulescu's staging, Jeremy Lawrence's translation, Jeff G. Rack's atmospheric set, A. Jeffrey Shoenberg's handsome period costumes and sterling performances by a huge ensemble make this a fascinating experiment."-- LA Weekly

"In a swirling, funny, very human coming-together, using original Chekhov and inventive playwright Matei Visniec's dialogue, and the help of the talented director Florinal Fatulescu, Chekhov's familiar characters intermingle in a dance of destiny.... Terrific and amusingly cogent."-- Back Stage West

"[A]n atmospheric, edgy and often provocative journey"-- Los Angeles Times

### **Lydie Breeze**

"[The] production is a work of considerable beauty. The portrait it contains reveals a friction between noble ideals and sordid actions. In this friction lies the essence of American history, an eternal reconciliation being played out by everyone who lives here."-- LA Weekly

"Utterly unpredictable...Compelling [and] entertaining."-- Los Angeles Times

"Incredibly gripping story...John Ross Clark as Joshua Hickman gives a superb performance...a powerful play with some very effective scenes-kudos to everyone in the cast for a fine performance."-- reviewplay.com

### **Roberto Zucco**

"Director Russell Milton and his hardworking 21 member cast make the theme of society's preoccupation with violence abundantly clear in a stylish staging for Open Fist Theatre Company."-- Los Angeles Times

"Bring(s) abundant humor to an episodic series of grimly suspenseful scenes in which the audience is left guessing who will be Zucco's next victim..."-- LA Weekly

### **The Devils**

"Romanian director Florinel Fatulescu... brings abundant black comedy to the Russian novelist's densely layered probing for the human soul...Fatulescu's staging finds a compelling parable for the banality of present day evil...."--Los Angeles Times

"Director Florinel Fatulescu and the unflappable team of actors and designers gathered reverently to his side prove their bravery by tackling this piece and making it as successful as it is...it's all part of a brilliant director's mad genius...a monumental production."--Back Stage West

"Open Fist's L.A. premiere, directed by Florinel Fatulescu, played up Egloff's farcical moments with gusto, while faithfully capturing the story's feverish, claustrophobic paranoia."-- LA Weekly

### **Abingdon Square**

"Martha Demson's superb direction underscores the Jamesian ambiguity in Maria Irene Fornes' period drama. Seething with sexual tension...."-- LA Weekly

"a stellar...L.A. premiere.... Demson's direction is appropriately calm and circumspect, and she creates some marvelously ambiguous, haunting stage pictures with Maureen Weiss and Josh Worth's set and Dan Reed's lights..." --Los Angeles Times

### **The Cosmonaut's Last Message to the Woman He Once Loved in the Former Soviet Union**

"...directed by Stefan Novinski with a pristine blend of tenderness and humor. The precariousness of memory, a series of ironic coincidences, and phrases occasionally repeated by different characters in contrary situations all establish the wistful, poetical tone — through which Novinski and his perfect cast navigate so brilliantly."-- LA Weekly

"...each new note resonating with the note before while adding a new shade of color, until the final effect is a stunningly unified whole. Director Stefan Novinski's intriguing vision of the play is brought to life here by a uniformly stellar and brilliantly cast ensemble."-- Back Stage West

### **Directors Festival 2003**

"love[d] every minute of it -- sometimes there's just nothing better. . . . a great theater bargain: five hours of theater across two nights . . . I'm talking about the Fist Fest 2003, the Open Fist Theater's annual festival of (superior) one-act plays."-- theater2k.com

### **Playhouse Creatures**

"...succeeds as both romp and tragedy. A vivid . . . valentine to the British theater, it is also a gritty glimpse of the often star-crossed women who were its earliest stars. . . . and the performers are all terrific, particularly the magnificently mannered Kenyon, a grande dame for the ages."-- LA Times

"...the characters are fascinating . . . Rapid-fire scene changes are executed by means of Donna Marquet's beguiling multi-layered set, loaded with pull-up tarps, pull-down backdrops and multiple curtains [and] Director Faye Jackson handles the backstage catfights with flair."-- LA Weekly

### **As I Lay Dying**

". . . haunting, superbly performed . . . performance and staging elements seamlessly nurture one another in a completely immersive theatrical reality."-- Los Angeles Times

". . . brings Faulkner's dark drama to life in a macabre dream state that's like being inside a pop-up book."-- LA Weekly

"virtually flawless production. . . . the beauty of this book's language, combined with the beauty of the images that Novinski, his designers, and performers bring to this tale of deceit and despair, make this the highlight of the 2003 local theatre season to date."-- Back Stage West

### **Songs of Joy and Destitution**

"Matthew Wilder and his collaborators have produced a powerful, thought-provoking evening that speaks directly, just as Euripides did 2400 years ago, to his audience's real concerns with current events." --KCRW

"This is an explosive piece of work--brash, risk-taking, saturated with innovation, angrily political, and not without irony or large dance numbers."-- Back Stage West

". . . the scale of this production's ambitions, and the urgency of its themes, cannot fail to impress."-- LA Weekly

### **The Mound Builders**

"Director Martin Bedoian provides a finely orchestrated production on Donna Marquet's handsome and flexible set, with solid support from Dan Reed's lighting, Piper Mavis' carefully coordinated costumes and Drew Dalzell's rich sound design. . . . excellent work from the whole cast . . ."-- LA Weekly

"'Mound Builders' is one of this year's highlights. . . . Under Bedoian's firm guidance, the funny, fiercely intelligent performers glide over their occasionally long-winded exchanges with style and grace."-- LA Times

### **I Licked A Slag's Deodorant**

"...theatrically eye-opening and not afraid to wear its big heart on its tattered, smeared sleeve."--Back Stage West

"Russell Milton wisely underscores the humanity and humor of this obtuse pas de deux, never allowing the grotesque reality of their relationship to overpower their inner need to bond with another human life."-- Variety

### **Flight**

"The work...finds a vivid imagining by director Charles Otte, an epic undertaking that consistently impels our interest. Staged to perfection, sumptuously visual, this production is universal and intimate...From its opening imagery of lonesomeness and cruelty to its bittersweet, congenial ending, which leaves us with an overwhelming sense of contentment, this production convinces us to appreciate the evanescence of life and the essential power of good theatre."-- Back Stage West

"Director Charles Otte has done a remarkable job presenting this U.S. premiere of Flight."-- LA Weekly

### **A Perchance To Dream**

"Director Florinel Fatulescu and his comically gifted cast approach their material with tongues planted firmly in cheek, right up until the play's wrenching final scenes. They aim to disorient, and they do--with plenty of chuckles along the way."-- Los Angeles Times

### **Exmass**

"With a strong cast, crisp direction and a warmly melodic score, it is a timely paean to lost innocence."-- KCRW Radio

### **Fen**

"...a portrait of agonies among rural British women in a strikingly tender production directed by Stefan Novinski upon a set of dirt."-- LA Weekly

"How fortunate...for British playwright Caryl Churchill's masterpiece to find its Southern California premiere with such an eminently capable, careful ensemble. ...and we have the kind of transforming experience only great theatre can provide."--Back Stage West

"'Fen' achieves a rare synthesis of performance and stagecraft that renders invisible the resource limitations of a smaller theater company in the service of urgent, socially relevant material. Highly recommended."--Los Angeles Times

### **Sharon and Billy**

"There are frightening undercurrents within almost every scene, and director Martin Bedoian tightly focuses the characters' subtexts. The performances are unsettling."-- Back Stage West

"Under bold direction from Martin Bedoian, each performance melds the tender and the angry."--LA Weekly

### **Casanova**

"Director Demson has found a delicate, graceful tone for the production...Demson finds a lovely balance between story and theme that fulfills the promise of the text. The performers are a joy... This production is one of those rare gems that succeeds beautifully on both counts."--Back Stage West

"Congdon strips away romantic notions...in this lushly realized but very adult production. Director Martha Demson deftly brings out the humor and the folly of a diverse set of colorful characters. This production provocatively deconstructs a myth while restructuring a historical view of sexual politics."-- Los Angeles Times

### **The Wooden Brecks**

"Dan Fields' direction turns the playwright's nimble ironies, robust language and theme of entrapment into sharp, even visceral focus." -- LA Weekly

"Directed by Dan Fields with some truly charming touches, "The Wooden Brecks" is a lot of fun...chock full of broad characters and grand performances..." --Theatre Talk, KCRW

"Glen Berger's eloquent fairy tale receives ingenious staging by Dan Fields, employing haunting performances shadow puppetry and miniature set components to evoke the aptly named town of Brood...this quirky gem never fails to engage."--Los Angeles Times

### **The Knacker's ABC**

"'Comic mayhem' is a critic's cliché, but here it's literal truth...Ron West's direction is a spectacular exercise in controlled chaos, and the huge and versatile cast tirelessly maintains the loony intensity. Aaron Harper's ingeniously destructible set, Usha Chohan's zany costumes, Peter Carlstadt's clever sound, and multitudinous special effects by Adrian Sparks and Cap Parnell all add merrily to the carnage."-- LA Weekly

"...achieves moments of high hilarity in director Ron West's lively staging. Into Vian's blitzkrieg of silliness, West's intrepid performers sally bravely forth, with no holds barred. ...absolutely first rate."-- Los Angeles Times

### **Three Sisters**

"Fatulescu has again created a divine balance between mild realism and stylization. . . . (Fatulescu) insists on keeping us laughing, yet it is laughter for the sake of something, a dark kind of laughter that disguises one's identification with the existential predicament of the characters."--Back Stage West

### **Macbeth – A Rough Night**

"From the moment it starts . . . Adrian Sparks' 75-minute Macbeth — A Rough Night is a revelation. . . . Each aspect of the production is carefully thought out, with such attention to detail that the show holds together tightly with a seeming rhythm and heartbeat of its own."-- Back Stage West

### **The King Stag**

" . . . one of the Open Fist Theatre Company's most imaginative and creative productions . . . using half-masks and puppetry, The King Stag is a diverse blending of multicultural theatrical traditions and Eastern influences. . . . One can only imagine how much fun it was to be part of this creatively inspired production team. The King Stag proves that The Open Fist Theatre is one of the most adventuresome groups in town."-- Back Stage West

### **How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients**

"Director Florinel Fatulescu orchestrates the piece with a controlled charm, balancing scenes with jest and gesture, building to each comic climax with visual flair... With an obscenely gifted cast... and the flawless direction of Fatulescu, this production is a vibrant conjuring of a dark world that delights and educates, while pricking us with barbs of a dark, damning critique."-- Back Stage West

"Director Florinel Fatulescu gives the right touch of the absurd to this well-acted world premiere . . . a seamless production . . . ."-- Los Angeles Times

### **Talk Show From Hell**

"...executed with devilish aplomb by Director Florinel Fatulescu and his comical cast."-- Los Angeles Times

### **The Abdication**

"The production is firmly anchored by C. Dianne Manning's craftsman-like staging and Martha Demson's sweeping performance. Manning draws pristine performances from her capable cast and the technical elements are uniformly excellent."-- Los Angeles Times

### **Escape From Happiness**

" As directed by the talented Martha Demson and performed by her superb cast, the production easily matches the genius of the playwright. Before we know it, three enjoyable hours of theatre have whizzed by like a police chase."--Back Stage West

### **The Life of Galileo**

"The Life of Galileo packs a punch thanks to Howard Brenton's lucid 1980 translation and Roger Smart's traditional, Brechtian staging... Smart's set is lush and cinematic... the production is riveting." --LA Weekly

### **Fall Off Night**

"A dazzling premiere production... The risk-taking philosophy of the Open Fist company provides the perfect venue for this multi-layered, off-center comedy."--Back Stage West

"The cast is uniformly terrific...on a fabulously haunting urban playground designed by Peter Hyde."— Nitelife

### **Sex, Death and Other Annoyances**

"...the members of the Open Fist Theatre Company...are universally fantastically talented, and their performances in this show are no exception... If there is anyone out there who has not yet discovered this theatre company, mark it on your calendars to do so this year."-- Back Stage West

### **Widows**

"...fine acting of a large cast, and exceptional production values"-- LA Weekly

### **We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!**

"... West directs the play tightly, with every physical and verbal joke pulled off just so."-- The Los Angeles Times

"...production is delightfully brisk and frantic, and unfolds like clockwork..."-- Back Stage West

### **Vieux Carré**

"...an evocative, indelible production at the Open Fist Theatre Company. . . . Once again, the Open Fist has opened the eyes of local theatre goers with a vital production of a vibrant work."--Drama-Logue

### **Flight of the Earls**

"The tension rolls in slowly, like thunder clouds...[in] Martha Demson's lovingly detailed production. The casting and performances are sublime..."-- LA Weekly

"Martha Demson's direction creates all the tensions needed to keep the drama captivating through play's end. Performances are all top notch."-- West Hollywood Weekly

### **Car Cemetery**

"This is a talented company...the acting is spontaneous and unencumbered. The physical layout, with its spatial desolation and complex lighting scheme and videos denote ambitious determination..."-- The Los Angeles Times

### **Exit the King**

"The Open Fist succeeds with an ambitious piece of theatre, when lately even some of our larger companies seem barely up to the challenge of an average Neil Simon comedy."-- Village View

### **The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant**

"The Open Fist's production of The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant is irresistible. Power, exotic lust and role reversal reach critical mass so rapidly."-- L.A. Weekly

### **The Night Angels**

"The Open Fist Theater continues to provide the local theater scene with challenging works that catalog the passions and struggles of the human condition and glisten with erotic tension."-- The Los Angeles Reader

### **The Architect and the Empress of Assyria**

"The bold acting choices by Demson and O'Connell, as well as their complete trust in director Hamzeh's vision of the challenging work, make for an intensely satisfying theatrical experience."-- Drama-Logue

### **Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi**

"...Martha Demson as Fish...is particularly powerful in conveying the insanity of her character as courteously as possible, almost as if it were a gift someone had sent her that she felt duty-bound to accept. The ensemble work these actors have mustered is terrific."-- Drama-Logue

### **The Sea Jewel**

"...excellent performances. [Tom] Blanton is a laser beam of intensity as Kristen, and [Arizona] Brooks evokes all the wonder and awe of an innocent creature facing the real world for the first time."-- Variety

### **The Vakhos**

"The talented troupe known as The Open Fist Theatre Company are at it again, stretching the boundaries of theatre in L.A. with their haunting, hypnotic version of The Vakhos."-- Drama-Logue