

St. Petersburg Times

'Kitefliers' has a certain air Series: 2b; REVIEW; [SOUTH PINELLAS Edition]

MARTY CLEAR. St. Petersburg Times. St. Petersburg, Fla.: Aug 12, 2005. pg. 2.B

Abstract (Document Summary)

Playwright Neil Gobioff said he and writing partner Shawn Paonessa wanted to surprise audiences with their new play, *The March of the Kitefliers*.

The March of the Kitefliers deals with an underachieving semi- misfit named Sam who hates his corporate career. He quits to manage a coffeehouse, a job he hates just as desperately, though for different reasons.

When *Kitefliers* falls short, it's from trying too hard. A long dance/mime segment is bizarre, boring and pointless, and the ending, an impressionistic sequence where the previously metaphorical kitefliers actually march, just does not work. It tries to be grand but it's just silly. (Kite-flying, explained at length but never quite sufficiently, is a symbol of Sam's insouciance.)

Full Text (400 words)

Copyright Times Publishing Co. Aug 12, 2005

Playwright Neil Gobioff said he and writing partner Shawn Paonessa wanted to surprise audiences with their new play, *The March of the Kitefliers*.

They've succeeded in a several ways.

First, Gobioff and Paonessa, who have created a few edgy and dark- hued pieces for Jobsite Theater, now deliver a wispy but extremely attractive little romantic comedy.

Second, they've handled their new genre with considerable aplomb, sticking to the requisite formula but enlivening it with an appealing central character and witty dialogue.

They also surprise with a delightful little plot twist, about halfway through the show, that makes perfect sense but still catches the audience off-guard.

The March of the Kitefliers deals with an underachieving semi- misfit named Sam who hates his corporate career. He quits to manage a coffeehouse, a job he hates just as desperately, though for different reasons.

A woman named Julia, much more conventional but still creative and open-minded, comes into the coffee shop, and the two are instantly smitten.

Their relationship blooms, or at least starts to bud. But Sam's impish lifelong friend Jack constantly taunts Sam for becoming so conventional, and he develops doubts.

At least through the first act, it's a ton of fun. Much credit goes to Paonessa, who had the idea for Sam before he and Gobioff started writing the play, and also portrays him in this production. His performance is charming in its own right, but it's also obvious that he feels much affection for, and affinity with, his character.

Jobsite newcomer Meg Heimstead is appealing as Julia, but her character isn't nearly as well-drawn or interesting.

When *Kitefliers* falls short, it's from trying too hard. A long dance/mime segment is bizarre, boring and pointless, and the ending, an impressionistic sequence where the previously metaphorical kitefliers actually march, just does not work. It tries to be grand but it's just silly. (Kite-flying, explained at length but never quite sufficiently, is a symbol of Sam's insouciance.)

The only problematic element in the performances (directed in lively style by Kari Keller) is David Jenkins as Jack. It eventually becomes clear why Jack/Jenkins is so loud and frenetic, but that doesn't make the behavior less annoying.

REVIEW: *The March of the Kitefliers*, through Aug. 21 in the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center's Shimberg Playhouse. \$16.50 plus service charge. 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 4 p.m. Sundays. Call (813) 229- 7827 or go to tbpac.org.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

People: Gbioff, Neil, Paonessa, Shawn

Dateline: TAMPA

Text Word Count 400

Document URL: