

## Theater review

# University Theatre's 'Flea' is a lusty, enjoyable show

By Debra Neff Nathans

*Special to The Capital Times*

I am not normally a fan of farce, but the idea behind the University Theatre's production of "A Flea in Her Ear" is interesting.

The translator, Frank Galatit, takes Georges Feydeau's 19th century French play and resets it in the 1960s, with references that are contemporary to that time. The result is still a farce, complete with mistaken identities, slamming doors and musical beds, but it grabs attention. Still period, but now superimposed on a 1960s set in the same absurd, tributary way as the "Austin Powers" movies.

Yvonne Deboshe (Betsy Thurman) suspects her husband, Victor (Mitchell Mullen), of an indiscretion, so she and her friend, Lucille (Sommer Austin), set a trap for him.

They write a letter from an anonymous woman requesting that Victor appear at a sleazy hotel called the Pussy A Go-Go for a tryst.

Victor assumes the letter must be for his studly friend, Blasé (Dominik Ryszard Rebilas), so Blasé goes to the hotel instead.

Then there have to be many mix-ups and misunderstandings along the way to complete the farcical plot.

I loved Kirk Domer's set and Shelley Alexander Cornia's cos-

## "A Flea in Her Ear"

by Georges Feydeau  
University Theatre  
Mitchell Theatre  
Last show May 4  
Tickets \$14  
(\$12 UW students)  
Call Vilas Hall  
box office,  
262-1500

tumes. The set is a mostly white apartment painted in a style that is strongly reminiscent of the paintings of Piet Mondrian.

In the second act, an impressive open set change switches it to the beautifully rendered sleazy Hotel Pussy A Go-Go, complete with a round, red bed and an unbelievably phallic lamp.

Cornia's period costumes are brilliant. I particularly liked Lucille's yellow dress with black dots, a short white coat, and a furry pill-box hat.

Lashawn Welch plays the hotel owner's wife, and she gets to wear a gossamer purple sheath with a shiny black bustier, knee-high boots, and a matching purple duster.

The script includes some really un-PC characters, including a passionate, violent "Spaniard," played by John Graham, and a weird "Indian" guru, played by Jason Schumacher.

The production handles these stereotypes by exaggerating them. They felt like 1960s period stereotypes, like a tribute to the caricatures that showed up in movies at the time.

Overall, the production could be tighter. On opening night, comic timing seemed a little off, and the play felt slow. It is long, it runs more than three hours including the two intermissions, but it could move faster than it does.

Performances are strong throughout. I particularly enjoyed Austin, who was consistently funny. Thurman started out a little subdued, but loosened up as the play went on. She made particularly good use of an ear-splitting scream, which she used as punctuation in the second and third acts.

Mullen has a dual role; he plays both Victor and Victor's double, an alcoholic bellhop. I enjoyed Mullen's over-the-top performance in both roles.

Adam Michael Blumberg plays a man who has a speech impediment: He can't use consonants. I enjoyed his flustered performance. The joke got a little old, but that's not Blumberg's fault; he did a good job with it.

Graham is funny as the passionate Carlos. I particularly enjoyed his many scenes with guns.