Dracula returns as fang-in-cheek thriller

Dracula, a revival of the Hamilton Dean and John L. Balderson play, starring Jean LeClerc, Lauren Thompson, directed by Dennis Rosa. Based on a novel by Bram Stoker, at the Colonial Theatre through May 13.

By Leigh J. Passman

A national touring production of Dracula has batted its way back to Boston to give the city a second taste of the entertaining classic. Dracula returns as it left, not really a mystery. Given the universality of Bram Stoker's novel, the widespread exposure to the plethora of vampire-cloned movies, and the nature of live theatre (particularly its intermissions), Dracula is a modern day form could not succeed solely as suspenseful mystery.

Instead, Dracula has been revived from the Hamilton Dean/John Balderson dramatization in what may be aptly described as a comedy thriller. Still suspenseful and exciting, the play, under Dennis Rosa's direction, conveys a more tongue-in-cheek (or fang-in-cheek, as the New York critics have tagged it) melodramatic tone. While sporadically poking fun at itself with audience asides by the Count and sight gags, Dracula is still told with tension, romance, and the pervasive theme of good over evil.

The play, in a little over two hours including the two intermissions, is fast-paced and never drags. Edward Gorey's design for the sets with his black and white etching-like detail are impressive and effective.

French Canadian accent and the husky tone called for by the role, makes his delivery somewhat stunted. Lauren Thompson aptly plays his entranced prey, the coy, blond Miss Lucy Seward. George Martin is excellent as Abraham Van Helsing, his senatorian and authoritative tone always in control.

William B. Cain is obscure as Dr. Seward, Lucy's father and proprietor of the Seward Sanitorium, where patients slowly die as victims of the Count. Malcolm Steward adequately plays the good-looking, boring stiff in love with Lucy. Leta Anderson and Geoff Garland give an entertaining flavor of their own as the maid and butler.

Finally, there is the wonderfully crazy Richard S. Levine, who as the captivating loonie, is forever keeping the Sanatorium staff on their toes and the audience in the aisles.

There is plenty of theatre that comes to Boston that is more important in a dramatic or social context than anything presented in Dracula. But for escapism amusement with a flair for light humor and a bit of drama, Dracula is most entertaining.

Jean LeClerc, stars in the touring production in the role popularized by Frank Langella (currently played by Raul Julia in New York). LeClerc conveys the necessary poise, charm, and sensual mystery. Yet his choppy, forceful projection, coupled with the galloping merger of a

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