

Fun with Dick and Dave: "Frost/Nixon," at the Harrison Hilltop Theatre through April 2

Written by Thom White

Monday, 14 March 2011 06:00

- [19.95\\$ 4Media DVD to PS3 Converter 5 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Lynda.com - Start with a Theme: Video Blogs in WordPress](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Creative Suite 6 Master Collection Student And Teacher Edition MAC](#)
- [Buy Adobe Premiere Elements 10 \(32-bit\) \(en,de,fr,ja\)](#)
- [Buy Adobe Premiere Elements 4 \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Microsoft Office 2003 Professional SP3 \(en,it,fr,de,es,da,nl\)](#)
- [Download Jaksta MAC](#)
- [Buy Cheap Microsoft Windows Vista Business with SP2 \(64bit\)](#)
- [Discount - Adobe Director 11.5](#)
- [Buy Cheap Microsoft Windows 8.1 Enterprise \(32-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Ashampoo Powerup 3 \(en\)](#)
- [Buy Xilisoft DVD Ripper Platinum 5 \(en\)](#)
- [Download Lynda.com - jQuery Essential Training](#)



Sitting down for Thursday's performance of *Frost/Nixon*, the set for the Harrison Hilltop Theatre's production heightened my concerns that I would likely be bored during the show. Even before arriving at the theatre, I anticipated struggling to concentrate, knowing I'm not much interested in history. But adding the minimalist approach to the set, with three platforms embellished by a strip of black rising up their centers, my hopes that the visuals, at least, would offer some interest dwindled. (While the look of the set is creative, I'm just not into minimalism.) It didn't take long, though, for director Tristan Layne Tapscott's efforts to prove my worries unwarranted, and by the end of the play, I was actually *thankful* for the simple set, as it didn't at all distract from the players' performances.

Tapscott's take on the story behind David Frost's interviews with President Richard Nixon following Watergate effectively moves the audience through an ebb and flow of impressions of the former president. Through Tapscott's interpretation of Peter Morgan's script, our initially negative feelings toward the president change to respect for Nixon for his power of words (if not his actions), then to disdain for his flagrant disregard of law, and then to sympathy for the man because he *is* a man, not a wholly evil entity.

Kevin Grastorf's portrayal of Nixon is nothing short of captivating. Not being very familiar with Nixon's speech patterns or mannerisms, I can't speak to Grastorf's accuracy in embodying the president. However, while obviously feigned, the actor's attempts to match the president's voice are unwaveringly consistent from beginning to end, and as such, Grastorf's efforts fascinated me; I wished he had more to say in the play despite his having a *lot* to say. And to watch him is

Fun with Dick and Dave: "Frost/Nixon," at the Harrison Hilltop Theatre through April 2

Written by Thom White
Monday, 14 March 2011 06:00

equally interesting, as Grastorf's eyes clearly convey various degrees of confidence, friendliness, and inner turmoil and anger.



Adam Michael Lewis, as Frost, is just as impressive. What continually strikes me about Lewis is that he excels at quirky humor and, in all the performances in which I've seen him (including the Curtainbox Theatre Company's *Art* and the Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse's *Squabbles*), he's unable to suppress his quirkiness completely. I find that to be wonderful, as it intrinsically adds a pleasing nuance to each of his characters. In

Frost/Nixon

, his humor plays as a palatable smarminess, enjoyable because it's funny rather than condescending. Lewis' talk-show host is believable as a confident entertainer, and as the show progresses, the actor adds a growing sense of inadequacy to his Frost. It's unquestionably evident that Lewis' Frost is aware that he's in over his head – a fish out of his entertainment waters tossed into an ocean of respectable journalism.

Amidst the ensemble, C.J. Langdon's confidence shines in his turn as James Reston, the American journalist who longs for Nixon to stand trial. Langdon is absorbing for his believable sense of idealism and the slightly superior edge it gives his characterization. (This is an actor whose work I hope to see a lot more of in the future.) Playing John Birt, the London Weekend Television executive who produces Frost's interviews with Nixon, James Fairchild is the production's most unaffected actor; beyond his plausible English accent, Fairchild doesn't seem to *be* acting, and his work comes across as refreshingly natural. Rounding out Frost's team, Joe Maubach manages to subdue his very funny nature (displayed quite well in the Hilltop's *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and

Complete History of America [abridged]

) to deliver a nuanced portrayal of American journalist and executive editor Bob Zelnick, but also sneaks in laugh-worthy line deliveries at just the right moments.

Among Nixon's team, Bryan Woods (brilliant in Harrison Hilltop's *Waiting for Godot*) mixes the right blend of condescending nonchalance and smugness in his Swifty Lazar. And while Paul Workman could better shade his chief of staff Jack Brennan – playing the part almost solely as stern – he does add impassioned layers to Brennan's personality toward the play's end, as the man to which Brennan is unwaveringly loyal begins to fall apart.



Also of note: Cari Downing, despite having few lines, makes a memorable impression in several roles through her humorous facial expressions and body language, while Kelly Anna Lohrenz brings her dependably solid acting ability to her turn as Caroline Cushing, Frost's love interest. (Lohrenz also looks stunning in costume designer Peggy Freeman's period selections.)

Fun with Dick and Dave: "Frost/Nixon," at the Harrison Hilltop Theatre through April 2

Written by Thom White

Monday, 14 March 2011 06:00

I entered Harrison Hilltop's *Frost/Nixon* expecting that, because of my own disinterest in the historical material, I'd be uninterested in the play. Thanks to Tapscott's eloquent execution of the material, though, I stayed fully attentive throughout the production, and left the performance delighted by what I'd seen. Even my play-hating companion for the evening, who prefers musicals, told me that he'd finally seen a play he actually loved. That's a high compliment for the Harrison Hilltop Theatre.

For tickets and information, call (563) 449-6371 or visit HarrisonHilltop.com.