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Attraction and Desire Meet in ‘Café Variations’



From left: Barney O'Hanlon and Deborah Wallace in the production of "Café Variations." Photo by Michael Brosilow

By [David Siegel](#)

[Thursday, November 14, 2013](#)

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Seductive romance is in store as "Cafe Variations" explores how longing for love, finding love, and even losing love makes us visible to ourselves in unexpected ways. Melding works of inventive playwright Charles Mee with lush Gershwin music into a series of connected vignettes is what Anne Bogart, artistic director of the renowned SITI Company has accomplished.

When asked about SITI, Tom Reynolds, director of Artistic Programming, Mason Center for the Arts said the company "has a history of presenting innovative and interesting theatrical works." The company "focuses on ensemble and collaboration, so there is rarely a 'star' or even a lead character in their works, but the real star is the way in which all of the actors work together to communicate with the audience."



Photo by Michael Brosilow

From left: Stephen Duff Webber and Ellen Lauren in foreground. Barney O'Hanlon in background.

"'Cafe Variations' is a play about the very delicacy of relationships; we want it to be very personal and appealing to an audience," said Bogart. The production is designed around the spoken language of the characters as they take journeys into the mysteries of personal connections, choreographed movement and a verdant Gershwin score that helps glue the production together as a "very humane piece," Bogart noted.

The play takes place "in a cafe we would all like to discover and know in our neighborhoods; a place where people meet and anything can happen; not just a place where everyone is plugged-in, yet unconnected with each other," Bogart added. The social life cafe setting will evoke a place, style and a way of life. It is a place where people are dressed-up, going out to enjoy and be attentive to one another.

The one-act production has a six-member, multi-cultural cast with several actors playing multiple roles (variations). In "Cafe Variations" characters explore different emotions and aspects of impressionistic moments, including conflicts.

When and Where

SITI Company's "Café Variations" at the Center for the Arts, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax.
Performance: Friday, Nov. 22 at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$44, \$36 and \$22. Visit the box office (open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.), charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or visit cfa.gmu.edu.

As we know, joy is not just for unlined youth. Bogart indicated that the actors are of various ages; the production shows that falling in and out of love is for everyone. After all, love at any age can help find within us unexpected inspired energy. The fire of "Romeo and Juliet" is not just for teenagers.

"We invite everyone to come and enjoy," Reynolds said. It will be "an exciting and interesting audience experience," he added.

Love can be an inspired struggle at times; SITI's "Cafe Variations" gives a new outlook to the exciting and astonishing struggle that love can be.

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