



Circle X Premieres Sheila Callaghan's *Lascivious Something*

by Ashley Steed | March 26, 2010

***Lascivious Something*, produced by Circle X Theatre Co., opens March 27; plays Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm; Sun., 2 & 7 pm; through May 1. Tickets: \$12-\$20 (pay what you can at all Sun. matinees). [Inside] the Ford, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood; 323.461.3673 or fordtheatres.org**

It's the first day of harvest for August, an American ex-pat who has settled on a remote Greek island with his beautiful, young Greek bride Daphne. Then Liza, a woman from his past, shows up and wreaks havoc. Circle X presents the premiere of Sheila Callaghan's Greek tragedy-inspired *Lascivious Something*, directed by Paul Willis and playing at [Inside] the Ford.

"My husband's Greek and we were traveling to a bunch of Greek islands," explains Callaghan. "We stumbled upon a vineyard this Canadian man had begun. It was just him working the land - he had given up everything to follow his dream. He had his two young kids and his wife and he wasn't Greek. I thought that was a crazy existence; to uproot your family to Greece to build a vineyard. So I started thinking of hubris and creating a Modern Greek tragedy."

She adds, "I wanted to write a play that was very lush and very sensual and filled with flavors and smells and sounds."



Silas Mitchell and Alina Phelan

She started writing *Lascivious* in 2002 when the presidential election was coming up. "I was worried about George Bush getting elected so this was on my mind," admits Callaghan. The play is set in 1980, the year Reagan was elected. "Our country took a hard turn to the right and never quite recovered," she says.

"So these were the two impulses I had while I was writing." She laughs, "Another thing is I didn't know much about wine and I wanted an excuse to get to know it."

The play was first commissioned by South Coast Repertory. Later on it was developed at SoHo Rep. And there was a workshop production of it at the Cherry Lane Theatre.

Protagonist August is an ex-activist who had a promising career as a revolutionary back in the US until he has a breakdown. He drops everything and runs away, landing into a vineyard in the California wine country. That's where he meets Daphne who is studying abroad for a year. She is very young, beautiful and elegant. They move to Greece and start a vineyard. A few years later, August's ex-lover and activist partner Liza arrives. And as the title suggests, "they had this very intense relationship - very hot, sensual and very angst ridden," says Callaghan. "14 years later she just shows up on the vineyard and we don't really know why." Also, "the date of the play, aside from being the day Reagan gets elected, is three days from the very first tasting of August's first crop he planted four years ago."

So which character is most like Callaghan? "They're all me!" she exclaims. "I'm big, outsized and obnoxious like August and filled with narcissism. I'm also a little crazy and manic like Liza. I have an obsession with clothing and superficial things like Daphne." She pauses briefly. "These people all sound horrible!" she admits. But, "I have a lot of love for them so I think empathy and compassion come through. There's definitely a piece of me in all of them." She laughs, "Of course I have to be everybody in the play."

The mood of the play is inspired by Greek tragedy. "There's a storytelling vibe," explains Callaghan. "Everyone's always telling stories about the island, the earth and the wine. So there's this languorous storytelling feel to it. It's very sensual - there's a lot of sexual emerging pulsing throughout the play."

"I wouldn't say it's a comedy," she says playfully. "But there is humor that comes through the characters. I wanted it to feel epic. I do feel it is large and lush."

It is also very theatrical. "There are these pulses of non-reality that come through that are to engage the audience in a less emotional and more intellectual way. So we'll see if those actually work," she reveals.

Although Callaghan lives in New York, she was involved as much as possible in the production. "I came out to do a weeklong workshop on the script with the cast before rehearsals started, which was great." They even recorded rehearsals so she could see the process and continue developing the play.

She does have ties to LA though. She got her Masters from UCLA in playwriting. And frequently comes out to LA as she is currently writing for the Showtime hit series *United States of Tara*.



Olivia Henry and Alina Phelan

Callaghan feels extremely fortunate to have such a wonderful design team and extremely talented actors. She adds, "I'm mostly excited about the non-realistic elements of the play. There are a couple of really spectacular moments that are really shocking and I've heard a couple of people gasp - it's fun waiting for those moments."

She and director Paul Willis have worked together before. "He really connected to this piece and it's been wonderful having him work on this play. We've been talking about the play

for years, so it's exciting to have it finally produced. There's a lot of incredible energy around this production — that is rare," praises Callaghan.

The play is also having a production in New York, which was just cast. "It's weird to have a double design process," says Callaghan, "they're completely different."

Callaghan hopes the audience is transported to another world for just a little while. "My favorite experience in the theatre," she says, "is when you leave the play not knowing where you are. When you've been so immersed in the world. That's something I wouldn't mind people felt after seeing this play."

Photos by Dawid Jaworski. Article by Ashley Steed.