



Two for the Show

{ Central Coast } News, Reviews and Interviews

- [Home](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Asked & Answered](#)
- [Opportunities](#)
- [By Charlotte Alexander](#)
- [By David Congalton](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact](#)

Reviews

Picasso at the Lapin Agile: An Entertaining Party

By Charlotte Alexander

October 11, 2014 (San Luis Obispo, CA) – So . . . all the hype surrounding Steve Martin’s featherlight [Picasso at the Lapin Agile](#) proclaims the play to be about Pablo Picasso and art, Albert Einstein and science, pop culture and “big” ideas.

But here’s the thing: Martin’s pastiche of bon mots, one-liners and really strange meet-ups featuring historical figures and “regular” guys and gals is, in reality, a one-note paean to the century just past. Yes, the 20th century – which is past. Almost as passé to us nowadays as the modest bar in 1904 Paris in which the play is set.



The 20th century – or rather the dawning of the “new” century now past – is referenced so often in this play that it feels like a third character that all the other characters in the play are waiting for. Einstein, played as wonderfully quirky but still a good sport by Cameron Rose, even comments after seeing one of Picasso’s drawings that “the 20th century can start now.”

Which brings up a question: does a play set at the beginning of the 20th century have anything to say about the arts, culture, science and “big” ideas of *this* century? If it does (and I’m not so sure it does), it’s only because its characters – famous or undistinguished – reach out to audience members and spark a bit of wonder, or laughter, or curiosity, or a sense of familiarity that reminds us that even 21st century “big”

ideas and questions didn't spring wholly-formed from thin air in the last 14 years.

It turns out, happily, that the characters – and the uniformly skillful actors who portray them – are reason enough to see [San Luis Obispo Little Theatre's](#) current production of *Picasso*.

First up is Freddy (the affable and endearing Bobby Kendrick) who as proprietor of the Lapin Agile makes it his business to make everyone, including the audience, feel at home in the bar. Once he has opened the place up for business, appropriately at the very beginning of the play, he welcomes the other characters into the action.

Along comes Gaston, played by the always-likable Tom Ammon in fine form. He and Freddy and Freddy's girlfriend Germaine (a zippy Megan C.C. Walker) later fill the spots between Picasso-Einstein verbal skirmishes with some apt questions and observations of their own. Lest anyone think Picasso (a pitch-perfect Toby Tropper), Einstein and the play itself are all talk, however, note that one of the pair's most interesting duels involves pencils drawn and brandished like swords.



In fact, this is a surprisingly physical production, in part due to the ability of these actors to interpret the script not just through their mouths, but through their entire bodies. Larry Kaml as Picasso's art dealer and Jamie Foster as a hapless inventor whose reputation will never live up to his own expectations are perfect examples of director Suzy Newman giving each member of her talented cast the room to fully inhabit their characters and their environment.

Alicia Klein, expertly handling more than one role, and Arash Shahabi as a mysterious visitor complete with glitter from the 20th century future, round out this gathering of interesting people.

Picasso at the SLO Little Theatre is a well-delivered toast to the 20th century. It is a playful, energetic party with some very entertaining guests.

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..... 36 Views: A Sensual Delight By Charlotte Alexander September 13, 2014 (Santa Maria, CA) – So . . . PCPA closes its 50th anniversary season with 36 Views, a play that few theatre-goers on the Central Coast will recognize. And the playwright, Naomi Iizuka, may be even less familiar, although she directed the playwriting program . . .

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