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## theater review

# Play And Pastiche

*'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'*  
Wall St. Center for the Arts

I'm happy to report that Brad Moniz' much-anticipated and -delayed Wall Street production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* does the intricate, enigmatic play justice.

Borrowing from Shakespeare, Beckett and Pirandello, Tom Stoppard's brilliant script follows two minor characters from *Hamlet* through riddles, play-acting and nebulous dialogue interspersed with brief, sporadic scenes from the celebrated Elizabethan tragedy.

Like *Hamlet*, Stoppard's tragicomedy examines human acts and acting within a variety of contexts ranging from the practical to the metaphysical to the theological. The result is a complex, mesmerizing play that's occasionally hilarious, often bewildering, sometimes chilling.

Rosencrantz (Huriel Nellis) and Guildenstern (director Moniz) recall Vladimir and Estragon of *Waiting for Godot* in their search for meaning

and purpose and in the repetitious emptiness of their conversations as they, like Beckett's characters, wait to play their roles.

A ragtag troupe of tragedians, led by the infinitely adaptable, infinitely resourceful Player (Roger Montalbano), adds slapstick humor and seriocomic theatricality.

Moniz deleted the play's final scene, which places Ros and Guil in proper context by reviving *Hamlet*'s conclusion, for a simple reason: "We ran out of actors."

The five local theater companies producing shows simultaneously creates "holes in the talent pool," Moniz said. "We've been lucky that there's been enough audience to go around, but there's not enough talent."

Fortunately, there's enough to cast accomplished-to-masterful actors in the show's key roles: Nellis and the volatile Moniz as the title characters and a goateed Montalbano as the amorphous Player are terrific, and Matthias Detmer's *Hamlet* is strong.

Moniz elected to make *Hamlet*'s Claudius (Michael Galvin) and Gertrude (Annette Cook) overtly sexual—almost uncomfortably so; their presence seems inappropriate.

Insufficiently versatile lighting detracts from a beautifully staged and costumed production presented on a large, puce-colored disk that becomes a ship's deck for Act Three.

The show is mercifully free of the by-now-routine Chico-theater inside jokes and additional lines.

The Wall Street cast seemed some-

what hesitant last Thursday. "I will be happy with it before it's through," Moniz said. "It feels like we're working, and it *should* feel like we're playing.

"It's a monster of a play," he continued. "It's really wordy, much more difficult to produce than read. It can only get better. The material is better than we are. We're not familiar enough with it that the words dance on top of the action."

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* continues Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:15 through June 2.

—MATTHEW BUDMAN