

# Raunchy sex farce is a hoot

**French comedy feels right at home in a big Yaletown condo**  
**Peter Birnie, Vancouver Sun**

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THE LEISURE SOCIETY

At Performance Works, 1218 Cartwright on Granville Island, to April 9

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Robust and raunchy, *The Leisure Society* is an excellent antidote for grown-ups who spend too much time catering to the kids by sitting through PG-rated mush at the movies.

Leave the too-young or too-prudish at home and catch this outlandish sex comedy, a low-down and dirty attack on modern sexual mores.

Diane Brown directs a *Ruby Slippers* production of the Francois Archambault play, and while she gives everyone in a four-member cast a chance to shine, it's Colleen Wheeler who takes off like a rocket.

As a supremely frustrated and often alcohol-soaked wife caught in a horribly flawed marriage, Wheeler had an opening-night audience howling with laughter at her character's many tics -- especially a hoarse half-laugh that burst from her at every attack of nerves.

Scott Bellis plays the hapless husband, whose emasculated moaning would be maddening if it weren't so funny.

Bellis is a master at taking a simpering schmuck and making him both likable and loathsome, and here he shines (in sweaty desperation) in often-hilarious battles with Wheeler's belligerent drunk.

Completing the cast with equally neat work are Robert Moloney as the couple's raunchy faux-friend and Hazel Venzon as his free and very easy girlfriend.

Sorry, she's not his girlfriend. They just have sex. Tidily translated from French by Bobby Theodore and just as neatly transplanted from Montreal to Vancouver, *The Leisure Society* plays out as a French sex farce but feels wholly at home in a big Yaletown condo; Yvan Morissette's set is a splashy and stylish evocation of the two-storey mansions perched atop many of our downtown's new green-glass towers.

Atop a baby grand piano sits a baby monitor. It stands as a symbol of the ignorance of parents too preoccupied with wine-soaked whining about their poor, pampered lives to truly care for or about their children; Archambault has no shame as he exploits the poor child's crying over the device and even resorts to the old trick of adults unknowingly being heard as they reveal secrets and/or make love.

And yet it works. *The Leisure Society* rollicks along with no regard for safety, getting more and more outlandish with every sleazy revelation by its supposedly civilized inhabitants. Rarely has the taste of Gallic acrimony been so successfully transferred to a Left Coast stage.