

PURE 'PLEASURE'

ACTOR AND DIRECTOR FIND A CURIOUS DELIGHT IN THIS FORGOTTEN WORK

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

Let us repeat a theatrical mantra: Actors are not the characters they play. And then allow Patrick Page to safely indulge his sense of connection with Biddeford "Pogo" Poole, the high-flying, iconoclastic playboy he portrays in the Old Globe Theatre's "The Pleasure of His Company."

"I've been surprised at it being sort of an easy fit," Page says. "I'm able to really understand Poole, which I maybe shouldn't admit. I mean, he can be very selfish."

That last part can't be Page. How selfish can a guy be who thoughtfully totes his canine companion along with him to rehearsals? (No kennels for little Sophie, the cute white pooch who pops out of Page's bag as the actor sits down for an interview near the Balboa Park theater.)

DETAILS

"The Pleasure of His Company"

When: Previews begin Saturday; opens next Thursday. Schedule: Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m.; through Aug. 17.

Where: Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park.

Tickets: \$42-\$64

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

But in the matter of Poole's outsized personality, Page's skills do seem a good fit. Earlier this year, he made a big splash as the lovably pretentious director Jeffrey Cordova in the Globe musical "Dancing in the Dark."

On Broadway, Page has played other pungent characters, including Scar in "The Lion King" and the titular Mean One in the Globe-sprung "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" Beyond all that, Page — who was just named the Globe's Shiley artist-in-residence — has a distinguished Shakespearean résumé.

For resident artistic director Darko Tresnjak, who is directing "Pleasure," Page proved the cure for some serious casting jitters.

Last summer, after the Globe decided to put the production on its 2008 schedule, "I started getting a little nervous; I was thinking: 'Who is going to play this part?'" Tresnjak recalls. "Because it requires something a little extra."

"Then I saw 'Dancing in the Dark.' Five minutes into it, I was like, 'Make the offer!' Because (Page) has a busy career. We were lucky to get him."

In the play, Poole is a globe-trotting socialite who suddenly returns to his family's San Francisco home for the wedding of his daughter, Jessica (Erin Chambers), whom he hasn't seen since she was small.

His appearance sparks all kinds of complications, especially when it develops that he has come as much to see his ex-wife, Kate (Ellen Karas), as Jessica.

Neither Page nor Tresnjak has ever seen the play staged, but then, few people on the planet have. "Pleasure" ran on Broadway for about a year beginning in 1958 and was made into a movie starring Fred Astaire as Poole in 1961.



Patrick Page (left) is Biddeford "Pogo" Poole, a globe-trotting playboy who gets acquainted with daughter Jessica (Erin Chambers, center) and his ex-wife, Kate (Ellen Karas), in "The Pleasure of His Company." Craig Schwartz

But there's no record of it having been revived onstage since.

"You can Google all day and you can't find a review or an article about a production other than the Broadway production," Page notes.

"So I certainly was coming to it completely naively. I had no idea how it would end. And that's really thrilling, to not know how something's going to end. To not know Shylock is going to get the pound of flesh (in Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice") — I mean, what would you pay *not* to know?"

That quality also appeals to Tresnjak, who gives credit to Globe artistic coordinator Samantha Barrie for bringing the work to the theater's attention. Last year, Tresnjak staged a well-received production of John van Druten's romantic comedy "Bell, Book and Candle," a likewise obscure play from the same 1950s time period.

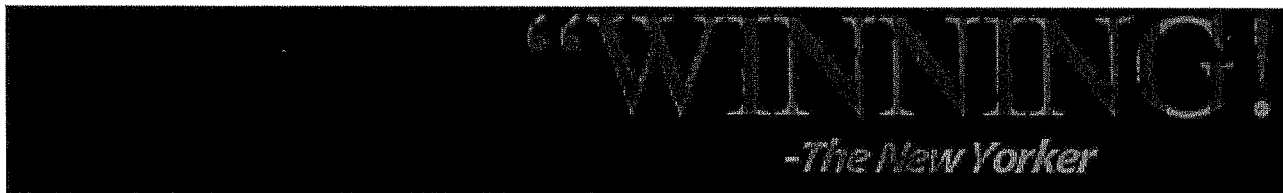
"I guess I do love the challenge," he says of doing such "forgotten" works. "(And) I do enjoy '50s American comedies, that writing. Because I find that underneath the glossy surfaces, the subtext is actually quite subversive."

In "Pleasure," he says, the comedy becomes a means to explore themes of regret and dad-daughter relationships without turning heavy.

"Certainly, a tragic play can tell us a lot about the world we live in," Tresnjak argues. "But I think people habitually neglect comedy. People don't think about comedy that way, but it can be a very effective way of telling us about the world."

"If it goes down easy and you're enjoying it, there's got to be something wrong with it — that's the attitude. But it needn't be that way."

James Hebert: (619) 293-2040; jim.hebert@uniontrib.com



July 14, 2008

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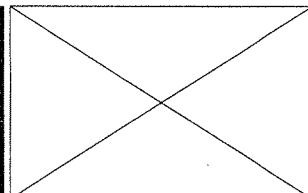
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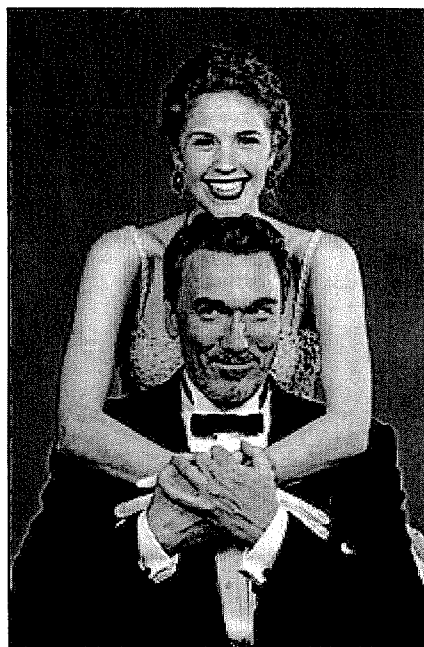
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Patrick Page Is a Playboy in *Pleasure* at Old Globe July 12-Aug. 17

By *Kenneth Jones*
12 Jul 2008

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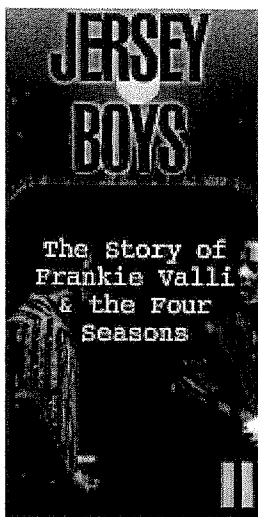
Patrick Page with Erin Chambers in *Pleasure*.
photo by Craig Schwartz

Patrick Page, late of The Old Globe's world-premiere production of *Dancing in the Dark*, has returned there to star in the comedy of marriage and family ties, *The Pleasure of His Company* by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner. Previews begin July 12 in San Diego.

Globe co-artistic director Darko Tresnjak stages the play, running through Aug. 17 in the Old Globe Theatre.

The cast for *The Pleasure of His Company* features Page (a Broadway veteran of *Julius Caesar*, *The Lion King* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*) as Biddeford Pogo Poole, Jim Abele as Jim Dougherty, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole, Ellen Karas as Katharine Dougherty, Ned Schmidtke as Mackenzie Savage, Sab Shimono as Toy and Old Globe/USD MFA graduate Matt Biedel as Roger Henderson.

"In the sophisticated comedy *The Pleasure of His Company*, San Francisco debutante Jessica Poole is planning her marriage to Napa Valley cattle rancher Roger Henderson, and hopes her father, the international playboy 'Pogo' Poole, whom she hasn't seen in 15 years, will come to give her away at the wedding," according to The Old Globe. "But his arrival disrupts the



entire household as he tries to entice Jessica into traveling the world with him, show up her fiancé, and win back the affections of his ex-wife. While his debonair style at first dazzles his daughter, he soon comes to realize that charm alone is no substitute for parental responsibility."

*

The Old Globe's other summer production is Donald Margulies' *Sight Unseen*, directed by Esther Emery, running in the Globe's arena stage at the San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium Aug. 2-Sept. 7.

The cast of *Sight Unseen* includes Tony Crane as Jonathan, Katie Fabel as Grete, Michael Haworth as Nick and San Diego native Kelly McAndrew as Patricia.

In *Sight Unseen*, "Jonathan Waxman is a celebrated American artist who yearns for something more in life. When he travels to England for his first European retrospective, he decides to visit his original muse and former lover, Patricia, whom he selfishly dismissed 15 years earlier. Waxman, whose work commands astronomical prices 'sight unseen,' wants to rediscover the passion and creativity that once fueled his work. But the visit — along with a troubling interview with a German art critic who questions his motives as a Jewish painter — leads to an unexpected crisis of identity. This incisive and humorous Pulitzer Prize-nominated and Obie Award-winning play deals with race, religion, and the meaning of art."

The Globe's 2008 Summer Season also includes the renowned Summer Shakespeare Festival, featuring *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *All's Well That Ends Well* playing in repertory.

Tickets for *The Pleasure of His Company* and *Sight Unseen* are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, visiting www.TheOldGlobe.org, or at The Old Globe box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

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The Tony Award-winning Old Globe produces a year-round season of 15 plays and musicals on its three stages, including its respected Shakespeare festival. Many Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Full Monty* and *Damn Yankees*, have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theatres across the country.

The Old Globe is under the leadership of executive producer Louis G. Spisto and co-artistic directors Jerry Patch and Darko Tresnjak.



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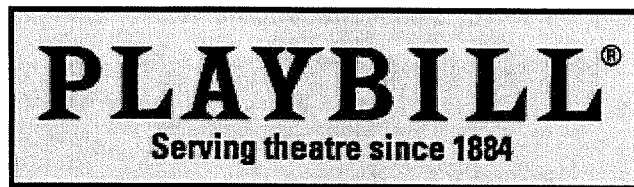


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Casting Announced for Old Globe's Summer *Pleasure and Sight Unseen*

By Kenneth Jones
May 7, 2008

Patrick Page, late of The Old Globe's world-premiere production of *Dancing in the Dark*, will return there this summer to star in *The Pleasure of His Company* by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner.

Globe co-artistic director Darko Tresnjak stages the play, running July 12-Aug. 17 in the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego.

On May 6 Old Globe executive producer Louis Spisto announced casting for The Old Globe's summer productions of *Pleasure* and Donald Margulies' *Sight Unseen*. The latter is directed by Esther Emery, running in the Globe's arena stage at the San Diego Museum of Art's James S. Copley Auditorium Aug. 2-Sept. 7.

The cast for *The Pleasure of His Company* will feature Page (a Broadway veteran of *Julius Caesar*, *The Lion King* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*) as Biddeford Pogo Poole, Jim Abele as Jim Dougherty, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole, Ellen Karas as Katharine Dougherty, Ned Schmidtke as Mackenzie Savage, Sab Shimono as Toy and Old Globe/USD MFA graduate Matt Biedel as Roger Henderson.

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questions his motives as a Jewish painter — leads to an unexpected crisis of identity. This incisive and humorous Pulitzer Prize-nominated and Obie Award-winning play deals with race, religion, and the meaning of art."

Tickets for *The Pleasure of His Company* and *Sight Unseen* are available through subscription by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, visiting www.TheOldGlobe.org, or at The Old Globe Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Individual tickets go on sale May 17.

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The Old Globe is under the leadership of executive producer Louis G. Spisto and co-artistic directors Jerry Patch and Darko Tresnjak.

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PHOTO CALL: San Diego's Old Globe Enjoys *The Pleasure of His Company*

By Matthew Blank
July 21, 2008

The sophisticated comedy *The Pleasure of His Company*, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner, began performances at San Diego's Old Globe July 12.

Staged by Globe co-artistic director Darko Tresnjak, the piece tells the story of "San Francisco debutante Jessica Poole [who] is planning her marriage to Napa Valley cattle rancher Roger Henderson, and hopes her father, the international playboy 'Pogo' Poole, whom she hasn't seen in 15 years, will come to give her away at the wedding," according to press notes. "But his arrival disrupts the entire household as he tries to entice Jessica into traveling the world with him, show up her fiancé, and win back the affections of his ex-wife. While his debonair style at first dazzles his daughter, he soon comes to realize that charm alone is no substitute for parental responsibility."

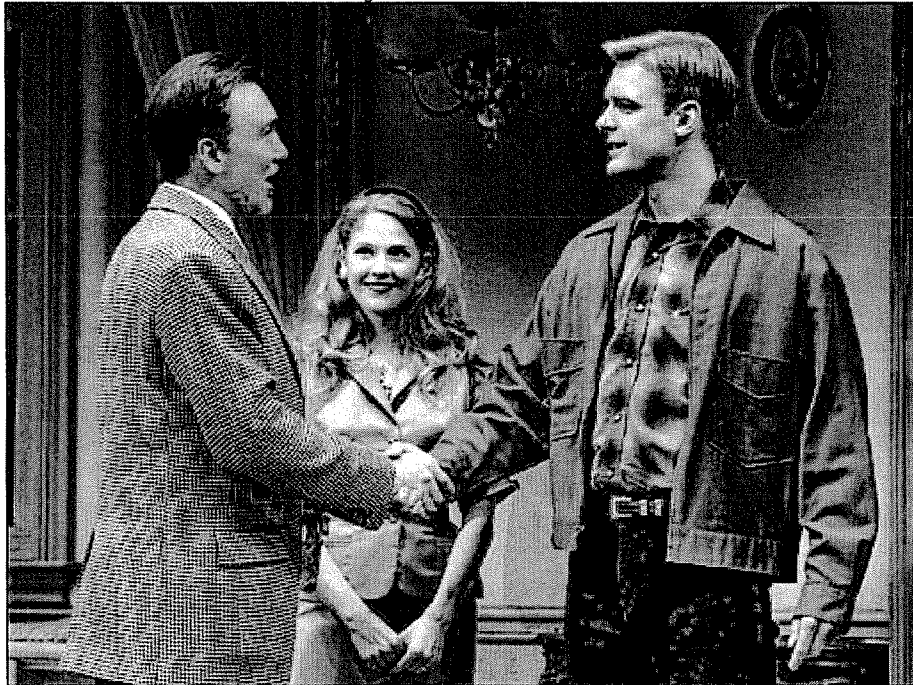
Recently seen on the Old Globe stage in *Dancing in the Dark*, Patrick Page (Broadway's *Julius Caesar*, *The Lion King* and *Grinch...*) leads the cast as playboy Biddeford Pogo Poole. Also featured are Jim Abele as Jim Dougherty, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole, Ellen Karas as Katharine Dougherty, Ned Schmidtke as Mackenzie Savage, Sab Shimono as Toy and Old Globe/USD MFA graduate Matt Biedel as Roger Henderson.

The Old Globe is located at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. For more information visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.

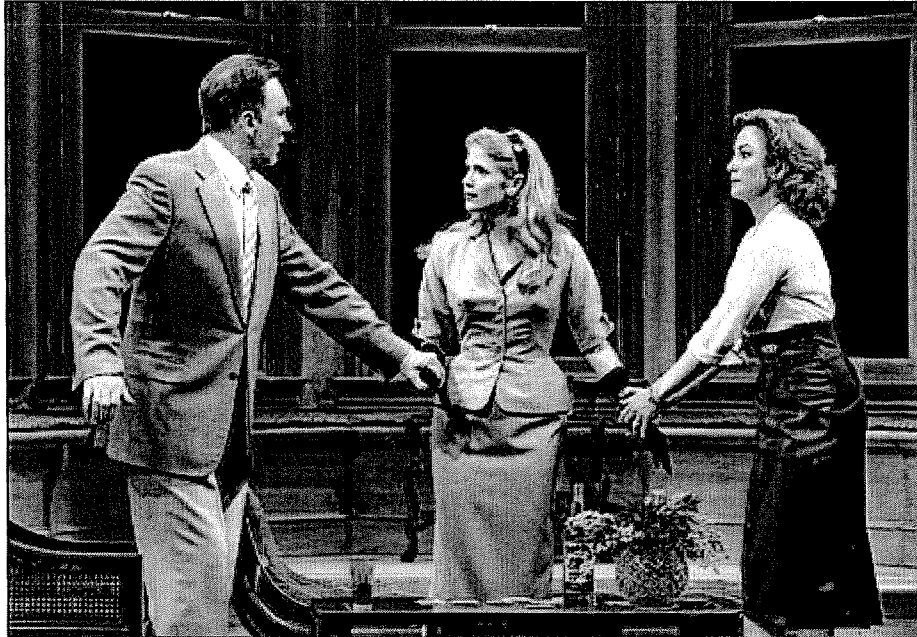
Here is a first look at the production, which runs through August 10:



From left: Ellen Karas as Katharine Dougherty, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole and Patrick Page as Biddeford Poole



From left: Patrick Page as Biddeford Poole, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole and Matt Biedel as Roger Henderson



From left: Patrick Page as Biddeford Poole, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole and Ellen Karas as Katharine Dougherty

All photos by Craig Schwartz

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North County Times

Preview Section

July 17, 2008

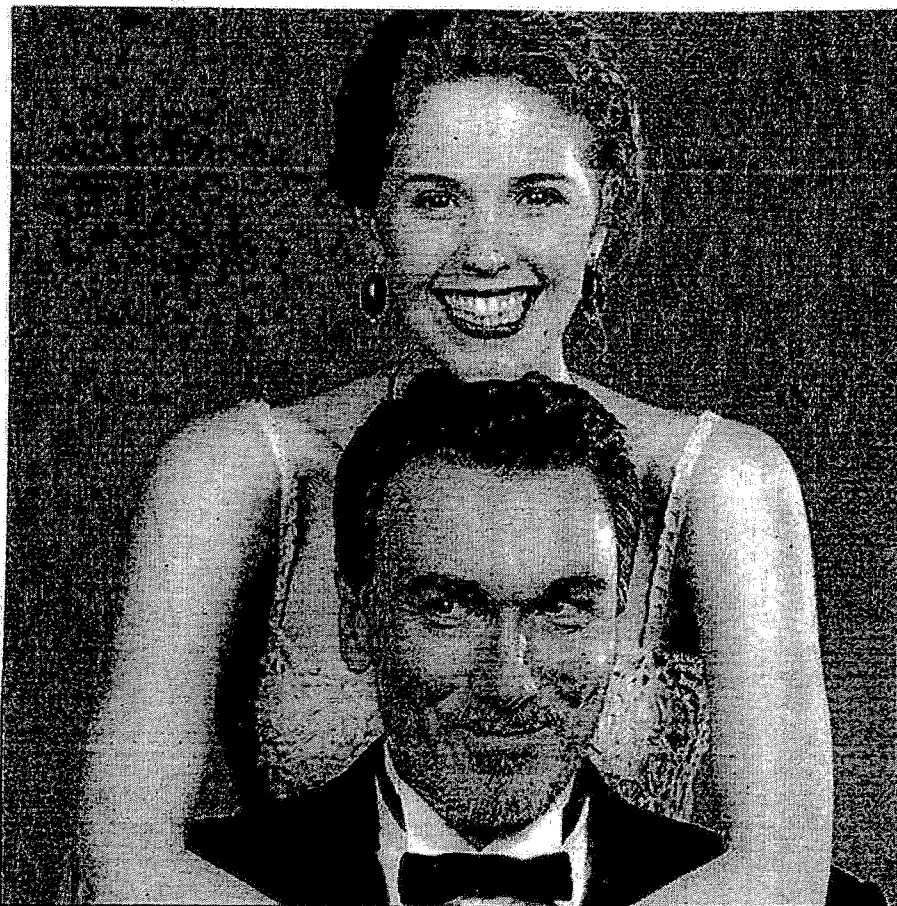
Old Globe opens '60s classic 'Pleasure'

Patrick Page, Erin Chambers, bottom, and Ellen Karas star in the Old Globe production of Samuel Taylor's comedy "The Pleasure of His Company," a classic 1961 comedy about an aging, dashing playboy who returns to San Francisco's swank society to walk his daughter down the aisle after a long absence from her life. "Pleasure" plays at 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; through Aug. 17 at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego's Balboa Park. Tickets are \$42 to \$64. Call (619) 234-5623.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG SCHWARTZ

July 3, 2008



CRAIG SCHWARTZ/THE OLD GLOBE

Patrick Page and Erin Chambers star in "The Pleasure of His Company," which opens at The Old Globe on July 12.

"Hike" July 31. Free. More information: (760) 839-4680, www.ci.escondido.ca.us.

'The Pleasure of His Company'

This comedy about a debutante (Erin Chambers) in hopes of having her ab-

sentee father attend her wedding runs July 12 through Aug. 10 at The Old Globe. Things get testy when Dad (Patrick Page) tries to upstage his daughter's fiancé (Matt Biedel). \$42-\$64. More information: (619) 234-5623, www.theoldglobe.org.

July 17, 2008

Old Globe presents 'The Pleasure Of His Company'

The Tony Award®-winning Old Globe presents *The Pleasure of His Company*, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner, directed by Darko Tresnjak, running now through August 10 in the Old Globe Theatre.

In the sophisticated comedy *The Pleasure of His Company* San Francisco debutante Jessica Poole is planning her marriage to Napa Valley cattle rancher Roger Henderson, and hopes her father, the international playboy "Pogo" Poole, whom she hasn't seen in 15 years, will come to give her away at the wedding. But his arrival dis-



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The cast (some in photo above) for *The Pleasure of His Company* features 2008 Shiley Artist-in-Residence Patrick Page, Broadway veteran and hilarious star of the Globe's recent hit musical *Dancing in the Dark*, as "Biddeford Poole," Jim Abele as "Jim Dougherty," Erin Chambers as "Jessica Poole," Ellen Karas as "Katharine Dougherty," Ned Schmidtke (*Sea of Tranquility*, *A Body of Water*, *Blue/Orange*) as Mackenzie Savage," Sab Shimono as "Toi" and Old Globe/USD MFA graduate Matt Biedel as "Roger Henderson." Tickets for *The Pleasure of His Company* are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, or by visiting The Old Globe Box Office in Balboa Park.

OLD GLOBE PRESENTS

THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY

Resident Artistic Director Darko Tresnjak Helms Delightful Comedy Starring Shiley Artist-in-Residence and Broadway Veteran Patrick Page

The Tony Award®-winning Old Globe presents The Pleasure of His Company, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner, directed by Darko Tresnjak, running July 12 - August 10 in the Old Globe Theatre.

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Tickets for The Pleasure of His Company are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, or by visiting The Old Globe Box Office in Balboa

See (Globe) page 15



stars return for more adventures as they continue to live in Manhattan. Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davs, Cynthia Nixon, Chris Noth, Evan Handler, Jason Lewis, funny Mario Cantone, David Eigenberg. Oscar® winner and "American Idol" favorite Jennifer Hudson joins the cast. Newline Cinema.

"Up The Yangtze" is a hair-raising look at what is happening to the people who live on China's biggest river as the Three Gorges Dam regurgitates it's waters. Ancient monuments are ruined and flooded, millions of people are uprooted out of their villages and some larger cities, and China does this all in the name of progress. Directed by Chinese Canadian Yung Chang.

"You Don't Mess With The Zohan" is another zany comedy from Adam Sandler and Judd Apatow ("Knocked Up") and Robert Smigel ("Triumph the Insult Comic Dog"). As an Israeli commando, Sandler fakes his own death to become a hairstylist in New York. John Turturro, Nick Swardson, Rob Schneider, Emmanuell Chiriqui. Directed by comic Dennis Dugan. Columbia Pictures.



Music

Dream Catcher at Viejas: American Idol sensation, Bo Bice, July 24. Willows Rd., Valley Center, (619) 220-TIXS.

21. Casino & Resort, 777 Harrah's Rincon Way, Valley Center, www.ticketweb.com or call 1-(866) 468-3399.

Humphrey's Concerts By The Bay: Hawaiian tour & Keali'i Reichel, June 26 & 27; Robert Plant & Alison Krauss, June 30. Bob weir & Rat Dog, July 1-2; Chris Isaak, July 16; Hippiefest,



Harrah's Rincon: Patti LaBelle, July 26; Jethro Tull, Aug. 14; Willie Nelson, Sept. 7; Gladys Knight & Al Green, Sept.

July 17-18; George Carlin, July 20; Feist, July 22; Doobie Brothers, July 23; Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, July 25; Ringo Starr, July 27; Susan Tedeschi & Derek Trucks, July 28; Toots & The Maytals, July 29; Dana Carvey, July 30; Emmy Lou Harris, July 31; Dolly Parton, Aug. 1. Pat Benatar & Neil Giraldo, Aug. 3; Huey Lewis & The News, Aug. 4. Call (619) 220-TIXS (8497).

Live Nation Concerts: Snoop Dogg, June 27; Toby Keith, July 11; Journey, July 15; Mercy Me, July 24; Alkaline Trio, July 27; John Mayer, July 29; Engelbert Humperdink, July 31; Steely Dan, Aug. 5; UB40, Aug. 11; Warped tour, Aug. 14; Dave Matthews Band, Aug. 22; Radiohead, Aug. 27; Poison, Aug. 28; Various venues. Tickets at (619) 220-TIXS.

Viejas Concerts in the Park: Carson Kressley Presents Cindi Lauper, B-52s, Joan Jett, The Puppini Sisters, June 27; Gabriel Iglesias, June 28; Los Lobos & Los Lonely Boys, July 26; Buddy Guy & George Thorogood, Aug. 3; Belinda Carlisle & Regeneration Tour, Aug. 4; Carlos Mencia, Aug. 9; Donna Summer, Aug. 20. Melissa Etheridge, Aug. 30; Jaguares, Sept. 12; Jeff Dunham, Oct. 10 Free Parking, just off 18 East at Willows Road, (619) 220-TIXS.

self-addressed envelopes for tickets to Coronado Playhouse, 1835 Strand Way, Coronado. (619) 435-4856.

Cygnets Theater Company: "The Receptionist" directed by Sean Murray, July 24 - Aug. 31. Rolando Theater, 6663 El Cajon Blvd., #N, (619) 337-1525.

North Coast Repertory Theater: "Madagascar," July 5 - August 3; New season tickets now on sale. First show is "Jacques Brel in Alive and Well and Living in Paris," a smash musical that began in 1968. Celebrates the music of French composer Brel. Sept. 13 - Oct 5, 2008. #987 Lomas Santa Fe Drive, Suite D, Solana Beach, 92075. Call (858) 481-1055 or toll free at (888)-776-6278.

Starlight Theater: Musicals under the skies for summer. Gershwin tunes in "Crazy for you," Now - June 21; Lapine & Sondheim's "Into the Woods," July 10 - 27; "Lerner & Lowe's "My Fair Lady," Aug. 14 - 31st. Starlight Bowl, Balboa Park, (619) 544-STAR.

Welk Resorts Theater: Rogers & Hammerstein's smash musical classic "The King and I" is set in Thailand. Now - July 27. #8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Call (760) 749-3448 or toll-free at 1-888-802-7469.

Theater

Coronado Playhouse: Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew", starts Sept. 5, Thursat, 8 pm; Sun., 2 pm; free. Send stamped,

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Rancho Sanlita Fe REVIEW

July 3, 2008

Old Globe presents 'The Pleasure Of His Company'

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(L-R) Patrick Page as "Biddeford Poole," Erin Chambers as "Jessica Poole" and Ellen Karas as "Katharine Dougherty" in The Old Globe's production of THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner, directed by Darko Tresnjak, playing in the Old Globe Theatre July 12 through Aug.10; photo by Craig Schwartz.theatre.

to realize that charm alone is no substitute for parental responsibility.

The cast for *The Pleasure of His Company* features 2008 Shiley Artist-in-Residence Patrick Page, Broadway veteran and hilarious star of the Globe's recent hit musical *Dancing in the Dark*, as "Biddeford Poole," Jim Abele as "Jim Dougherty," Erin Chambers as "Jessica Poole," Ellen Karas as "Katharine Dougherty," Ned Schmidtke (*Sea of Tranquility*, *A Body of Water*, *Blue/Orange*) as Mackenzie Savage," Sab Shimono as "Toi" and Old Globe/USD MFA graduate Matt Biedel

as "Roger Henderson."

Tickets for *The Pleasure of His Company* are available by

calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, or by visiting The Old Globe Box Office in Balboa Park.

OLD GLOBE PRESENTS
THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY

Resident Artistic Director Darko Tresnjak Helms
 Delightful Comedy Starring Shiley Artist-in-Residence
 and Broadway Veteran Patrick Page

The Tony Award®-winning Old Globe presents The
 Pleasure of His Company, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia
 Otis Skinner, directed by Darko Tresnjak, running July 12
 - August 10 in the Old Globe Theatre.

In the sophisticated comedy The Pleasure of His Company
 San Francisco debutante Jessica Poole is planning her
 marriage to Napa Valley cattle rancher Roger Henderson,
 and hopes her father, the international playboy "Pogo"
 Poole, whom she hasn't seen in 15 years, will come to
 give her away at the wedding. But his arrival disrupts the

entire household as he tries to entice Jessica into traveling
 the world with him, show up her fiancé, and win back the
 affections of his ex-wife. While his debonair style at first
 dazzles his daughter, he soon comes to realize that charm
 alone is no substitute for parental responsibility.

The cast for The Pleasure of His Company features
 2008 Shiley Artist-in-Residence Patrick Page, Broadway
 veteran and hilarious star of the Globe's recent hit musical
 Dancing in the Dark, as "Biddeford Poole," Jim Abele as
 "Jim Dougherty," Erin Chambers as "Jessica Poole," Ellen
 Karas as "Katharine Dougherty," Ned Schmidtke (Sea of
 Tranquility, A Body of Water, Blue/Orange) as Mackenzie
 Savage," Sab Shimono as "Toi" and Old Globe/USDMFA
 graduate Matt Biedel as "Roger Henderson."

Tickets for The Pleasure of His Company are available by
 calling (619) 23-GLOBE, online at www.TheOldGlobe.org,
 or by visiting The Old Globe Box Office in Balboa

See (Globe) page 15



◀ From (Globe) page 10

Park.

Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner co-wrote
 the award-winning Broadway play, The Pleasure
 of His Company, in which Skinner starred in the
 original Broadway production. Taylor made his
 Broadway playwriting debut with The Happy
 Time in 1950. He also wrote the plays Avant!,
 Legend, and Sabrina Fair. He co-wrote the popular
 Audrey Hepburn film adaptation, Sabrina, earning
 a Golden Globe Award and an Academy Award
 nomination. Other film credits include The Eddy

Duchin Story and the Alfred Hitchcock films
 Vertigo and Topaz. Taylor was also nominated
 for a Tony Award in 1962 as a co-producer of the
 play No Strings, for which he also wrote the book.
 Skinner, an American author, playwright and
 actress, studied theatre at the Sorbonne in Paris
 before beginning her career on the stage in 1921.
 TICKETS: \$29 - \$59

BOX OFFICE: (619) 23-GLOBE [www.
 TheOldGlobe.org](http://www.TheOldGlobe.org)

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07/04/08

NEWS AND VIEWS



...News from around the Globe... The Old Globe has named acclaimed actor **Patrick Page** (left) the 2008 Shiley Artist-in-Residence. Page knocked everyone out with his uproarious turn as the pompous director, Jeffrey Cordova, in the Globe's world premiere of *Dancing in the Dark* last fall. Now he's in rehearsal as Biddeford Poole in the upcoming production of *The Pleasure of His Company* (coincidentally, another Fred Astaire movie!), which opens July 12. Director Darko Tresnjak says he's a dream to work with...

And on the financial side of the Globe, the **James Irvine Foundation** has awarded a \$750,000 3-year grant to support programming efforts in southeastern San Diego.

The Globe recently acquired a 43,000-square-foot Tech Center in the area, and it's hoped that this will become an artistic hub in the community, for play development, performance and training programs for area students and residents.

THEATER REVIEW

Revival has its charming moments

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

Yes, Biddford "Pogo" Poole is charming and erudite and a kick to hang out with. So was the vampire Lestat.

One small difference: Pogo's particular thirst is not for blood but for love — or, more accurately, for hero worship, fawning and adulation. He extracts every last drop of those in "The Pleasure of His Company," the funny if puzzling play that just

DETAILS

"The Pleasure of His Company"

When: Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m.; through Aug. 17.

Where: The Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$42-\$64

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

opened at the Old Globe Theatre.

Like last season's "Bell,

SEE 'PLEASURE,' ETI

Book and Candle." "Pleasure" is a romantic comedy plucked from the Broadway dustbin for revival by Darko Tresnjak, the Globe's resident artistic director and treasure-seeker-in-chief.

This 1958 work by Samuel Taylor (who scripted "Vertigo" and co-wrote "Sabrina") and the actress-writer Cornelia Otis Skinner was a minor hit on Broadway, and it became a 1961 movie starring Fred Astaire.



Jessica Poole (Erin Chambers) gets reacquainted with her wandering father, Pogo (Patrick Page), in "The Pleasure of His Company." *Craig Schwartz*

'PLEASURE'
CONTINUED FROM E1

Long-absent father returns for a wedding

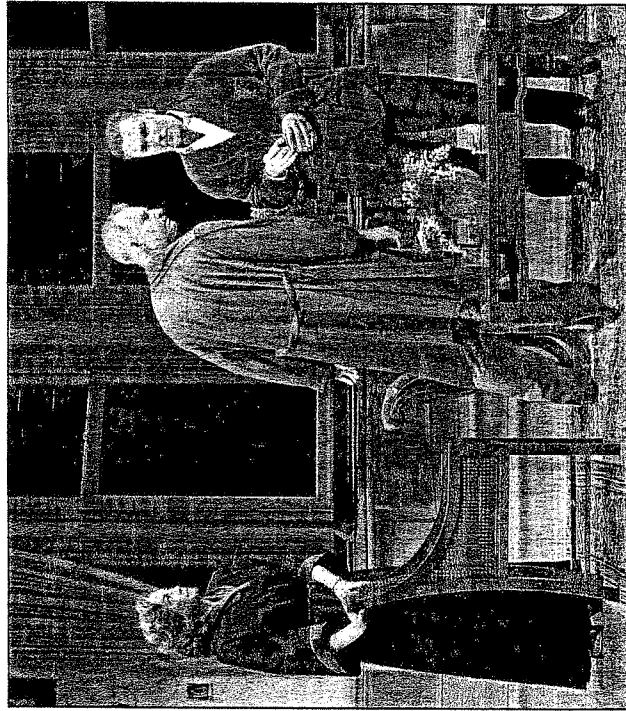
aitre as Pogo.

Tresnjak stages the play with his trademark flair for atmosphere, opening with a sheer blue curtain decorated with mosaic blossoms, that rises to the tune of Rosemary Clooney singing "Half As Much." It reveals designer Alexander Dodge's sumptuous San Francisco mansion interior, with warm woods that make it look tastier than a gingerbread house. (You might want to make like Pogo and just move right in.)

The play's best lines have a similarly polished sheen, helped by a cast that's mostly deft at handling the work's sometimes-sputtering rhythms. But for all the style and wit, it's hard not to wish this comedy away with family bonds and the conflict between responsibility and self-fulfillment — came away with a worthy conviction or two.

One thing "Pleasure" does have is an ideal Pogo. Patrick Page displays a wary, cunning elegance as this Globe-trotting playboy who has popped back into town for the wedding of a daughter he barely knows.

The actor, so good as a hopelessly egotistical stage director in the recent Globe musical "Dancing in the Dark," dials



There's tension as Kate (Ellen Karas); her husband, Jim (Jim Abele, center); and her ex-mate, Pogo (Patrick Page) have a meeting of the minds in "The Pleasure of His Company." *Craig Schwartz*

Jim (Jim Abele), who comes from old money and has the sweeping Golden Gate view to prove it.

Pogo has swept in from Kenya, site of his latest adventure,

to give away Jessica at her wedding to the young gentleman Roger (Matt Biedel). In his gently tyrannical way, he makes himself right at home in his ex-wife's house; there's an

especially funny and telling moment when the normally assertive Jim mutely accepts Pogo's empty cocktail glass like an animal-dumbwaiter.

It may be a relic of the play's '50s vintage, but there's something jarring in the way Pogo's long absence is treated as almost a lark (a feeling compounded by Chambers' subdued, fleeting expression of surprise when her father arrives unannounced). For Jessica, apparently, growing up filthy rich, trading Pogo's exploits from afar in society magazines, was fair consolation for the fact he missed her entire childhood.

Now, of course, Pogo wants to make up for it all, and his intensions expose family fault lines that threaten to make like a quake, particularly when Pogo starts scheming on Kate.

Though Page is at the center of things, Ned Schmittke is an appealing comic force in the rich role of Kate's father, Mackenzie. He's a scholar whose libertine views on life (though he doesn't have the courage to act on them) are at odds with those of his practical daughter.

"Morally is purely low blood pressure," he proclaims, as he backs Pogo's efforts to get Jessica to travel the world with him instead of getting mar-

ried.

Karas seemed on opening night to be feeling her way into the character of Kate early on, but hit her stride in full fury during the second act, her exasperation with Pogo sparks some of the best comic scenes.

Chambers is a graceful presence as Jessica, though a soft delivery made her lines a bit hard to hear at times. Abele is suitably stoic as Jim, and Biedel conveys fiancé Roger's blend of humphkin-hood and hard-won country wisdom. Sab Shimono has a limited role as the butler, Tot, but serves as a welcome, dignified foil to all the hand-wringing around him.

There's a lot of frothy fun to be had in watching this family wade through a thicket of misdeeds and misunderstandings, and Tresnjak and his cast have likely made the play more entertaining than it has a right to be.

But its sense of consequences seems skewed and confused, and that makes an otherwise charming revival just a little bit less of a pleasure.

James Hebert: (619) 293-2040; jim.hebert@uniontrib.com

Page's presence makes Old Globe's 'Company' a pleasure

PAM KRAGEN
STAFF WRITER

Last year, director Darko Tresnjak delighted audiences with a deliciously retro production of the '60s comedy "Bell, Book and Candle" in the Globe's intimate theater-in-the-round.

Tresnjak, now the Globe's resident artistic director, heads back in time once again this summer to excavate yet another retro gem, the 1958 comedy "The Pleasure of His Company," on the Old Globe's main stage.

While the rarely staged play by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner doesn't have quite the sass and sparkle of "Bell, Book and Candle," Tresnjak still manages to make it work — due in large part to the casting of Broadway vet Patrick Page as the pompous playboy "Pogo" Poole. It's a pleasure to be in Page's company, and when he's center stage, magic inevitably happens.

Page was first introduced to Globe audiences last winter as the self-adoring director in the musical "Dancing in the Dark," and on Broadway he has played the Globe-born "Grinch" and "The Lion King's" Scar. So vainglorious roles like Pogo Poole — described in the script as "fortified by conceit" — come naturally.

But what makes Page endearing in "The Pleasure of His Company" is the warm and electric chemistry he creates onstage with Erin Chambers, the young actress who plays Pogo's worshipful

REVIEW

"The Pleasure of His Company"

When: 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; through Aug. 10
Where: Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego
Tickets: \$42-\$64
Phone: (619) 234-5623
Web: theoldglobe.org

daughter, Jessica.

When they're twisting joyously together to the Frug at the top of the second act, Tresnjak captures lightning in a bottle once again.

Page (recently named the Globe's Shiley Artist-in-Residence for 2008) is the best thing about "The Pleasure of His Company." Without him, it would be only a mildly amusing rocket ship back in time.

Written two years before the birth control pill liberated American women from perinatal pregnancy, "The Pleasure of His Company" must have seemed daringly liberal at the time.

In it, 22-year-old San Francisco college grad Jessica Poole must choose between marrying the sensible Sonoma rancher Roger and settling into domestic life or tossing convention to trot around the globe with her bon vivant, jet-setting father Pogo (who has suddenly reappeared in her life after a 15-year absence, just days before her wedding).

Jessica's open-minded grandfather supports her escape from matrimonial "prison," but her conservative mother, Katharine — now happily remarried to an up-



COURTESY PHOTO

Erin Chambers and Patrick Page play a daughter and father happily reunited after 15 years apart in "The Pleasure of His Company."

tight attorney, Jim — is fighting to keep Jessica from being swept off her feet (as she was, at Jessica's age) by Pogo's intoxicating charms.

The play is very much of its time, with leisurely pacing, Alexander Dodge's glamorous gingerbread Victorian living room set (with a hyperartificial view of the Golden Gate Bridge through the bay windows) and all the smart trappings of late '50s life — spike heels and fabulous designer dresses (by costumer Fabio Toblini) on the ladies, cock-tails and card games and ci-

gars for the menfolk, and swinging sounds on the hi-fi, from Rosemary Clooney to Perry Como. There's even a wise Chinese butler to run the household, a seeming staple of many late '50s and early '60s films and TV series.

Tresnjak's direction is faithful to the period, and as always in his shows, it really sails when characters begin to dance or sing. The play gets off to a slow start, in part because of the hesitant and often-stiff performance of Ellen Karas as Pogo's ex-wife Katharine. She struggled with

some lines during a Sunday performance and didn't seem to have either the maternal bond with Jessica or the sensual, fun-loving nature that would have appealed to Pogo years before. Chambers, as Jessica, does have that spark, though, so she seems a natural "chup off the old block" as Pogo's daughter.

The always-reliable chameleon actor Ned Schmidtke returns in a saucy, funny performance as Jessica's granddad, Mackenzie Savage (though his reddish makeup and Mark Twain-style hair and costume are off-putting). Matt Biedel seethes believably as the dullish but earnest and loving rancher Roger (who is constantly one-upped by his soon-to-be father-in-law), Jim Abele blusters as Katharine's husband, Jim, and Sab Shimon is wickedly funny as the butler, Toi.

"Pleasure" isn't a fall-out-of-your-seat funny comedy but it's generously dusted with laughs, thanks to Page's performance and Tresnjak's comic eye. There aren't any big surprises in the script, though the final scene (where Jessica must choose between her frivolous father and her faithful fiancé) has some nail-biting moments. I won't give away any plot secrets here, but I will say that life is a lot more interesting with Pogo (and his onstage inhabiter, Page) in it, and audiences are lucky to have the pleasure of his company for a couple of hours at the Globe.

Slanted Script

Pogo, they claim, "can order dinner but can't order his life."

The curtain rises at the Old Globe and *wah-lah!* We're in the majestic living room of a Victorian mansion. A bay-window seat, with nine-foot windows, overlooks the Golden Gate Bridge (we're in San Francisco's Marina District, east of the Presidio and up, maybe, around Lombard). An antique chandelier, sporting two tiers of large glass balls, hangs from the 12-foot ceiling. Intricate Victorian molding — polished maple or golden oak? — makes the entire room look sculpted.

Add the occasional clang of a cable car and the dronings of tugboats and foghorns — like tubas and forlorn baritones — and Alexander Dodge's set for *The Pleasure of His Company* shouts "dream house." The set's so appealing, you wonder why anyone would ever want to leave such a stately, comfortable abode. But leaving is what the drawing-room comedy's about.

We're in San Francisco, June of 1958. In less than a week, young Jessica Poole will marry Roger Henderson. She plays piano and adores poetry and art; he raises prize bulls in the Napa Valley and is numb to culture. Though their differences are obvious, Jessica sees through them and loves, she says, his pure heart.

Jessica's prosaic stepfather Jim owns the house, which her mother Katherine treasures. The sturdy walls and glimmering antiques give Katherine a sense of permanence. During her first marriage, to Biddeford "Pogo" Poole, esquire, she knew nothing comparable. An international playboy, he's been globe-hopping since their divorce 15 years earlier. If Pogo's done half the things he boasts, he'd be stiff competition for the guy in the Dos Equis commercials ("stay thirsty, my friends") alleged to be "the most interesting man in the world."

Guess who's coming to the wedding? Even though he's only written Jessica three letters in 15 years, Pogo arrives. He orders 15 cases of Dom Perignon, vintage '43 and '47. But has he come to give Jessica away at the altar or steal her away before marriage "cuts her down in the prime of her life"? She should, he says, quoting Henry David Thoreau, march to her own drummer, hear her own music.

Sides form in the long, uneventful first act: the stay-at-homes vs. the hit-the-roads. The former — Katherine, her husband Jim, and Jessica's fiancé — advocate security, responsibility, respectability (Pogo, they claim, "can order dinner but can't order his life"). Hit-the-roads champion the spontaneity, beauty, and danger that travel affords. Their arguments exude excitement.

The script slants the case so relentlessly in favor of hit-the-roads, pogo-sticking from country to country on a grand tour, that the stay-at-homes' motives feel leaden. Their best reason, at the Old Globe, is Dodge's gorgeous living room, especially when York Kennedy's lighting crafts an incrementally roseate sunset throughout Act One.

If you don't inspect it too closely, *The Pleasure of His Company's* a bauble and, though talky, somewhat entertaining. The play's so undemanding, you might be surprised that the authors also wrote the script for Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Nonetheless, it's hard to overlook emotional gaps (how, for example, could Jessica romanticize such an absent father?) and blazingly clear-cut oppositions.

Fabio Toblini's period costumes — drab browns for the stay-at-homes, flashy hues for Pogo — enforce a current stereotype. Toblini could have dressed the former in red and the latter in blue, since the play reflects today's alleged red-state-versus-blue-state, conservative/liberal opposition. It's probably unfair to project contemporary concerns onto a period piece, but the cut-and-dried contrast between authenticity and elitism is as shaky in the play as it is among today's more rabid prognosticators.

In 1958, Pogo scored points for daring. Today, he's exhibit A for "Peter Pan syndrome." He's running not toward adventure but away from adulthood. Elegant Patrick Page almost succeeds in making Pogo dashing (after the opening-night curtain, those who stood applauded Page's lively comic turn), but he can't gloss over the obvious: Pogo's a spoiled brat. His lopsided feelings for his daughter sound more like a cry for attention than sincere affection. Pogo doesn't want Jessica; Peter Pan wants another Wendy.

REVIEW

JEFF SMITH



Erin Chambers, Patrick Page in *The Pleasure of His Company*

The Pleasure of His Company by Samuel Taylor Skinner and Cornelia Otis Skinner
Old Globe Theatre, Simon Edison Centre for the Performing Arts, Balboa Park
Directed by Darko Tresnjak; cast: Sab Shimono, Patrick Page, Erin Chambers, Ellen Karas, Jim Abele, Ned Schmidtke, Matt Biedel; scenic design, Alexander Dodge; costumes, Fabio Toblini; lighting, York Kennedy; sound, Paul Peterson
Playing through August 10; Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at 8:00 p.m. Matinee Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. 619-232-5623.

Among the stay-at-homes — including Jim Abele as Jessica's stepfather and Matt Biedel as Roger — only Ellen Karas's Katherine gets to fight back, some. Karas has spunk and an impressive slow burn, but the script sabotages her from the start. Sab Shimono gets laughs as Toi, the servant. Dressed in a white cotton suit with a mop of silver hair and mustache, Ned Schmidtke's Mackenzie Savage looks like Mark Twain and advocates Thoreau's rugged indi-

vidualism. But the script tags him too: the champion of the solitary life ends up playing solitaire.

Erin Chambers is a chipper Jessica, though her voice fades when she talks upstage (there may be a dead spot near the bay window). The character's underdrawn and, in the end, hard to take, even in a pleasant, drawing-room comedy. Jessica's plans don't just include having it all; she wants *all* of it on a strict deadline. ■

THEATER

Comedy 3, drama 1

by Jean Lowerison

'The Pleasure of His Company'

The lives of the rich (if not famous) are on display in Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner's *The Pleasure of His Company*, playing through Aug. 10 at the Old Globe Theatre. Darko Tresnjak directs the 1958 comedy.

The spectacular San Francisco living room of Katharine (Ellen Karas) and Jim Dougherty (Jim Abele), with a sweeping view of the Golden Gate, is the site of last-minute wedding plans for Katharine's 21-year-old debutante daughter Jessica Poole (Erin Chambers) and Napa Valley cattle rancher Roger Henderson (Matt Biedel).

The proceedings are disrupted by the appearance of Jessica's long-absent father, the thrice-married jet-setter and self-described "sybarite in a sober world" Biddeford "Pogo" Poole (Patrick Page), long on charm and clever conversation but short on reliability. Jessica is thrilled (she hasn't seen him since she was a little girl); ex-wife Kate and Jim rather less so, especially when Pogo announces he's not only staying in the house, but has installed himself in Jim's study.

Also in town is Katharine's crusty old mother, Mackenzie Savage (Ned Schmidtke). When Savage teams up with Pogo, social convention is in peril. Savage opines that "morality is merely a blood pressure" and objects to the notion of giving the bride away at all: "Why give her to somebody else to see? She hasn't begun to use herself!" Page, the Globe's Shiley Artist-in-

Residence (last seen as the pretentious director in *Dancing in the Dark*) is terrific as hedonist Poole, so blinded by his own charm that he even tries to hit on his ex, and only realizes how empty his globe-trotting life has been when he sees his daughter. He and Karas, the permanently exasperated former wife, play off nicely against each other.

Chambers and Biedel are cute as the earnest young couple. But my favorites are Schmidtke's Mark Twain-like Savage and Sab Shimono's houseboy Toi, who does a terrific job despite being saddled with the very '50s theatrical linguistic handicap of the "Asian" l-for-r letter substitution.

But the real star is Alexander Dodge's spectacular set. If it looks somehow familiar, there's a reason: the inspiration was the Hitchcock film *Vertigo*, which Taylor wrote.

Gentle messages can be found here about regret, the father-daughter relationship and (if you really push it) the idle rich versus the working rich. But *The Pleasure of His Company* isn't about social problems; deep down it's a pleasant if shallow family comedy full of engaging characters and clever dialogue that doesn't ask you to ponder any great questions. It's just good, solid entertainment — perfect for a summer night.



L-R) Ellen Karas as "Katharine Dougherty," Jim Abele as "Jim Dougherty" and Patrick Page as "Biddeford Poole" in The Old Globe's production of *The Pleasure of His Company*, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner, directed by Darko Tresnjak, playing in the Old Globe Theatre July 12 through Aug. 10

CREDIT: PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ

The Pleasure of His Company plays through Aug. 10, at the Old Globe Theatre. Shows Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.theoldglobe.org.

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San Diego Arts
'Pleasure of His Company'

By Jennifer Chung Klam
 Posted on Jul 20 2008
 Last updated Jul 20 2008



Old Globe artistic director Darko Tresnjak has a knack for taking little-produced gems, dusting them off and putting them on stylish display for renewed appreciation. Case in point: last year's charming retro production of John van Druten's "Bell, Book and Candle."

Happily, such is also the case with his latest find. "The Pleasure of His Company," which sparkles with humor and appeal despite a problematic script.

Tresnjak and a well-cast ensemble mount this long-awaited and worth-the-wait revival at the Globe. The comedy about family and marriage by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner ran on Broadway in 1958, became a film starring Fred Astaire and Debbie Reynolds three years later, and then seemed to drop off the radar.

Globe artist-in-residence Patrick Page leads the cast as the charming, profligate Biddeford "Pogo" Poole. After 15 years of globetrotting absence, the wealthy playboy returns, ostensibly to give his daughter Jessica away at her impending nuptials. She's set to wed an earthy and handsome – if dull and uncultured – cattle rancher. But Pogo, as manipulative and selfish as he is charismatic, has other ideas.

Page is just right as a sophisticate, a sybarite and a scamp. With a twinkle of mischief in his eyes and a sardonic smile, his Pogo is the kind of selfish guy you love to indulge anyway – at least for a little while.

Between wooing his ex-wife (now married to a very practical and well-behaved attorney) and enticing his daughter to flee her marriage and travel the world with him, Pogo manages to turn the household upside down.

Ellen Karas plays Jessica's mother, a bottled-up but still fiery woman who only wants the best for her daughter. Erin Chambers is perky and elegant as Jessica, though she needs to dial up the volume to make sure she's heard.

Ned Schmidtke gives a fine comic turn as Jessica's grandfather, a likeable rascal and armchair philosopher playing at Thoreau and Swift. He objects to Jessica's wedding, on the grounds that she shouldn't be confined to the "dull comfort of marriage." He encourages her to see the world with her father, despite the social and emotional fallout. Morality, he reasons, "is merely low blood pressure."

But it is the lack of emotional fallout that proves one of the play's flaws. Choices are made – lovers are jilted – with little consequence or care. And a young woman whose father ran out on her during those crucial and combative teen years might not be so eager to take him back as an adult. And Sab Shimono garners laughs by his faux-Chinese gibberish as the fawning Chinese servant.

These may be flaws of antiquity, but "Pleasure" was actually progressive for its time, with its suggestion that a young, intelligent

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woman might aspire to a life filled with adventure and experiences, not just babies and homemaking. Or at least, adventure and then babies.

These characters come down on either side of a dichotomy: grounded, practical and lethally humdrum or worldly, cultured, adventurous and charming. It seems living a life of excitement and responsibility are mutually exclusive.

Yet these problematic areas do little to lessen the pleasure of this revival. What the script lacks in depth this production sure makes up in charm and style. Alexander Dodge's lavishly appointed San Francisco manse draws its own applause, with a wood stairwell and bay window looking out at the city's most famous icon, the Golden Gate Bridge. Fabio Toblini's costume design sets the era with muted greys for Jessica's mother and stepfather, and earth tones for her rancher fiancé, leaving lively bursts of color for Jessica and her profligate father. Jim Abele as stepdad and Matt Biedel as cattle rancher fiancé fill out the excellent cast.

Dates : Tues.-Sun., through Aug. 17
Organization : The Old Globe
Phone : (619) 234-5623
Production Type : Play
Region : Balboa Park
URL : theoldglobe.org
Venue : Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

About the author: Jennifer Chung Klam is an editor at The Daily Transcript and a freelance arts and culture writer. More by this author.

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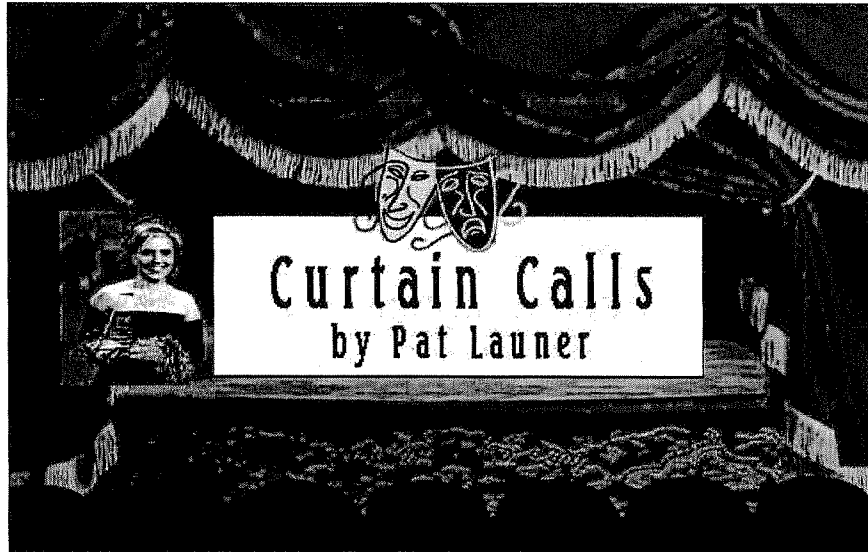
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07/25/08



CHARMED, I'M SURE...

THE SHOW: *The Pleasure of His Company*, by Samuel Taylor with Cornelia Otis Skinner (who starred in the original production). The show was a success on Broadway in 1958, but hasn't been revived since, though it was made into a Fred Astaire/Debbie Reynolds/Tab Hunter film in 1961. The same year *The Pleasure* premiered in New York, Taylor was also making a big splash on the big screen; he wrote the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," which happens to be Globe artistic director Darko Tresnjak's favorite film. Since it

was also set in San Francisco, he used the movie as inspiration for his *Pleasure* production. Both were costumed by the legendary Edith Head, and her designs for the film motivated the designs for the Globe show.

THE STORY: A comic exploration of charm, and family. Level-headed Jessica Poole, a wealthy San Franciscan, is about to marry Roger, a fellow Stanford alum who's taken over his family's cattle ranching business. Several days before the wedding, her father sweeps in with considerable fanfare, determined to give the bride away, even though he hasn't seen her in 15 years, and his ex-wife (on whom he also may have designs) is happily remarried. He's just the kind of guy your mother warns you about: showy, smart, ultra-clever, self-serving, self-confident and self-absorbed. He could charm the skin off a skunk. He's empty inside, but he fills his life with adventure, travel and daring escapades. Ever-devoted Jessica has kept a scrapbook of his exploits and conquests all these years. She says she sees through his shallow façade, but she's swept away by him nonetheless. Pogo has a way of making everyone else's life seem dull and gray. Now he wants to show off Europe to Jessica; he even charms her grandpa and the Chinese houseboy. No one is immune from his charismatic allure. Except, of course, for Jessica's all-but-forgotten fiancé and put-upon stepfather. Takes a man to smell a rat. And yet... things don't turn out the sensible, responsible way you'd expect.

THE PERFORMERS/THE PRODUCTION: The production is stunning. Alexander Dodge, who also designed *Bell, Book and Candle* for Tresnjak last summer, has created a gloriously detailed, San Francisco Victorian mansion, with ornate woodwork, wainscoting and balustrades, a spindled archway over the staircase, parquet floors and a perfect view of the Golden Gate Bridge out the bay window. The lighting is spectacular, created by resident Shakespeare Festival designer York Kennedy, a San Franciscan who knows exactly how the light and fog shift over the course of a day. The costumes (Fabio Toblini) are superb evocations of the late 1950s, with hats and gloves and lovely, hip-clinging shapes for the women.

Tresnjak has, as always, given a great deal of attention to intricacies of character and stage business, and there are many delightfully subtle little moments. The cast is flawless, each creating a robust, full-bodied character from what could be, in less skilled hands, sitcom caricatures or cartoons. At the center of the action is Patrick Page, the 2008 Shiley Artist-in Residence at the Globe. He's had plenty of practice for a self-absorbed character; he was the bombastic director Jeffrey Cordova in the world premiere musical, *Dancing in the Dark* at the Globe last year. And he played The Grinch on Broadway (in the Globe-created *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*), as well as Scar in *The Lion King*. So he fits comfortably into the clothes of Pogo Poole, the consummate narcissist and egoist. You want to hate him, but his self-satisfied magnetism draws us in, just as it does the

helpless characters. As Pogo's ex-wife, Kate, Ellen Karas is solid and assured, except when she's not; provoked by Pogo, she reveals her vulnerabilities and regrets. As Kate's second husband, Jim, Jim Abele is sturdy and stable, until Pogo turns him into a bumbling idiot who tumbles down stairs and can barely put two words together he's so flummoxed and flabbergasted by the goings-on in his family's ancestral house.

Erin Chambers is precisely right as Jessica, sensible and frivolous, skeptical and swept away. She turns out to be pretty callous toward her upright, uptight husband-to-be, excellently inhabited by Matt Biedel (the Biedels are hard at work this month; Amy's doing great work at *Diversionary* in *Yanks!*, and Matt, an alumnus of the Old Globe/USD MFA program, is holding his own at the Globe as a hunky cowman). The comic relief comes from Broadway veteran Sab Shimono as Toi, the Chinese houseboy, saddled with some stereotypical lines that he pulls off with panache. Ned Schmidtke, who's proven his marvelous dramatic chops at the Globe before (*A Body of Water*, *Blue/Orange*, *Pericles*) has a terrific time as Jessica's grandfather, Mackenzie, who looks decidedly like Samuel Clemens/Mark Twain, with his shock of white hair and mustache. Mackenzie is a ruminator, a cogitator, an iconoclast who fancies himself a latter-day Thoreau. He doesn't pull any punches, and he's enjoying every minute of the mayhem that's descended on the Dougherty household. He's a lovable character, who surprises us at the end, nearly takes off with the others for Paris.

There are some quibbles about the 'message' this play is imparting. You may think the production is *Much Ado* about too little, but it sure is a joy to behold.

THE LOCATION: Old Globe Theatre, through August 17

BOTTOM LINE: BEST BET

'The Pleasure of His Company' is a buffet of comedy

By Diana Saenger

Anita Loos, acclaimed American screenwriter, playwright and author, once said this about charm: "Without it, America would be grim." There is nothing grim about the Old Globe's current production of "The Pleasure of His Company," and Patrick Page, one of the leads in the comedy, runs a close race with Clark Gable as a character full of charm.

Page plays Biddeford "Pogo" Poole, an absentee father of 15 years to his only daughter, San Francisco debutante Jessica Poole. Her mother, Katharine (Ellen Karas), has remarried noted attorney Jim Dougherty (Jim Abele), who has raised Jessica as his own. Jessica is about to marry rancher Roger Henderson (Matt Biedel) and preparations are in full swing for a swanky wedding.

Jessica hasn't seen her father since she was a young girl, but feels she knows everything about the international playboy through clippings she's kept in an album.

Because the family never knows where to reach Poole, they never expect the wedding invitation to reach him. Much to Katharine's horror, but Jessica's exuberant joy, Poole shows up and moves into Jim's historical San Francisco home.

The family affair-themed



Ellen Karas (left), Erin Chambers and Patrick Page star in "The Pleasure of His Company," which runs through Aug. 10 at the Old Globe.

play was written by Samuel Taylor (screenwriter of the film "Vertigo") with Cornelia Otis Skinner. The Globe production, directed by Darko Tresnjak, is the first revival of the play since its Broadway debut in 1958. It became a film in 1961

with Fred Astaire and Debbie Reynolds in the leads.

"The Pleasure of His Company" is a cornucopia of delight. Most impressive is the set designed by Alexander Dodge. The curtain opens to reveal a thin curtain resembling an histor-

ical picture frame which rises to reveal a beautiful living room and sweeping staircase of the Dougherty's historic Victorian home. There are many exquisite items in the room — the window with an awesome view of the Golden Gate Bridge, the window's

décor, the room's wood trimming, the mirrors — all superbly impressive.

The story is a simple one, but this cast builds it into a compelling drama that Taylor has laced with wonderful dialogue and much humor. Neither Jim nor Roger are

happy to meet the infamous Poole. Jim's tolerance of him trying to woo Katharine is short lived while Roger can't bear that Jessica is considering postponing the wedding to travel around the world with her father.

Rounding out some of the more comedic roles are Sab Shimono as Toi, the family's servant, and Mackenzie Savage as Katharine's witty father, Ted. Page is perfect as the amusing and conniving Poole. He charms Jessica into thinking they can recapture their lost years together. He reminds Katharine what she once saw in him and he convinces Toi perhaps he would like to travel the world with him as well.

Credit must also go to lighting designer York Kennedy and sound designer Paul Peterson whose work on the stage is very impressive. The sound artfully becomes a character in the play as Jessica and Poole recapture memories about the sounds of the boat horns during the fog on the bay.

There are lessons to learn by all the characters in "The Pleasure of His Company." And when they're delivered in a buffet of comedy, it's a real treat for playgoers.

The play runs through Aug. 10. More information: (619) 23-GLOBE, www.TheOldGlobe.org.



The hard way

Disciplined cast, great tech mark Globe's *The Pleasure of His Company*

By Martin Jones Westlin

One of the most intriguing angles to The Old Globe Theatre's *The Pleasure of His Company* has nothing to do with the acting or the script. It involves a terrific piece of tech work, wherein the sun sets in real-time over San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, in full view of the lucky stiffies from the city's posh Presidio district. The sky darkens in lockstep with the plot, marking the action as effectively as Patrick Page's performance and the anecdotal writing by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner.

In fact, there's an awful lot to like about this piece, chiefly because it makes its point the hard way. The stately sunset and statelier living quarters are no match for the play's wacky situations and complex family relationships, and those elements combined make this play the bedroom farce that it is—but the craziness is often quite subtle, and the cast is charged with keeping things low-key. That takes some serious actorial restraint, with the players painstakingly toeing the line between situation comedy and something approaching burlesque. With few exceptions, and under Darko Tresnjak's direction, *Pleasure* (a Broadway success in 1958 and a movie hit three years later) is an ideal exercise for seasoned actors, and it's certainly among The Globe's better pieces in a while.

San Francisco debutante Jessica Poole (Erin Chambers) is engaged to Napa Valley rancher Roger Henderson (Matt Biedel), and she's aching for her long-absent dad Biddeford "Pogo" Poole (Page) to show up at the wedding. Alpha male Pogo seems intent on breaking up the pair; he disses Roger as a rube, and he'll wine and dine Jessica at every turn, claiming he's making up for lost time (he's even scored two tickets to Paris, and the flight leaves directly after the reception). But Jessica, it turns out, isn't the real object of his affections, and in typical Pogo fashion, he's been using her all along to rekindle things with ex-wife Katharine (Ellen Karas).

Pogo's obviously found himself in a million compromising situations amid all that globetrotting, and he's talked his way out of every one of 'em with room to spare. His defense mechanisms feature an ersatz charm and a subtle condescension, both of which he's brought back home in substantial measure—and Page wears these traits like he sports his own skin. Watch the chemistry develop between Pogo and manservant Toi (Sab Shimono); Page is excellent at ingratiating himself as the situation requires.

Karas and Chambers nicely reflect their characters' exasperation with the menfolk, although Karas lacks some of the matriarchal qualities that would have helped define Katharine. For his part, Biedel overplays Roger every so often—he's a sensitive lover one minute and a thin-skinned hothead the next, and it's surprising that Tresnjak hasn't moderated the latter behavior.

But Tresnjak is an excellent hand at making action fluid and readable, and that's a tall order with farce and its frenetic traits. Pleasure thus looks and feels more like a slice of life than a parody of it—it calls us on our own romantic weaknesses without hammering us over our own unsuspecting heads.

This review is based on the opening-night performance of July 17. The Pleasure of His Company runs through Aug. 10 at the Old Globe mainstage, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. \$54-\$56. 619-23-GLOBE or www.oldglobe.org.

Write to marty@edarts.info and editor@sdcitybeat.com.

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THEATER



Jessica Poole (Erin Chambers) eagerly reunites with Biddeford (Patrick Page), her absentee lout of a father, in *The Pleasure of His Company*.

The hard way

DISCIPLINED CAST, GREAT TECH
 MARK GLOBE'S *THE PLEASURE
 OF HIS COMPANY*

BY MARTIN JONES WESTLIN

One of the most intriguing angles to The Old Globe Theatre's *The Pleasure of His Company* has nothing to do with the acting or the script. It involves a terrific piece of tech work, wherein the sun sets in real-time over San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, in full view of the lucky stiff's from the city's posh Presidio district. The sky darkens in lockstep with the plot, marking the action as effectively as Patrick Page's performance and the anecdotal writing by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner.

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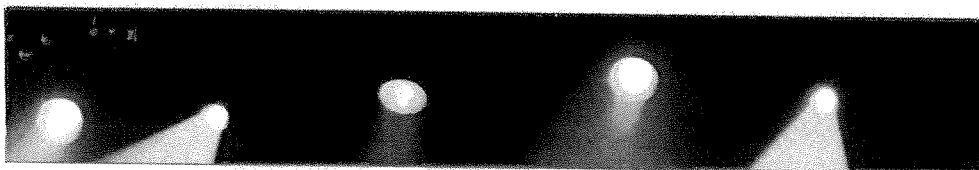
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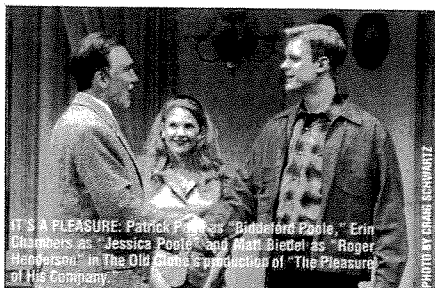
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Write to marty@sdcitybeat.com and editor@sdcitybeat.com.



SDJJ | what's goin' on



IT'S A PLEASURE: Patrick F. O'Connell as "Biddisford Poole," Erin Chambers as "Jessica Poole," and Matt Biedel as "Roger Heberston" in The Old Globe's production of "The Pleasure of His Company." PHOTO BY SCARLETT SCHWARTZ

in Embarcadero Marina South beginning Aug. 1-2 with Monica Mancini in "Remembering Henry." This salute to her famous father Henry Mancini will be conducted by Matthew Garbutt. Expect to hear your favorites, including "Moon River" and "Pink Panther."

"Baseball Goes Pops with Dave Winfield" honors America's favorite pastime, with baseball music conducted by Robert Thompson and patter by Padres legend Dave Winfield (Aug. 8-9). Randall Craig Fleischer will take to the podium Aug. 15-16 for the best of Broadway, with music from the Great White Way. You can see "The Wizard of Oz" on screen at Summer Pops Aug. 17, with the San Diego Symphony transporting audiences "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

"The Machine: A Pink Floyd Tribute" follows Aug. 21 with Maestro Garbutt on the podium. This one-night stand will feature audio pyrotechnics – along with the usual fireworks. Davy Jones of "The Monkees" will bring his music and antics to the Pops stage Aug. 22-23, and Pops will say farewell to its summer season Aug. 29-31 with the ever-popular 1812 Tchaikovsky Spectacular. Maestro Garbutt will conduct both concerts.

If you haven't yet seen Broadway/San Diego's touring production of "Phantom of the Opera," you'd better hurry. This blockbuster show (with Jewish sensation Marni Raab starring as Christine) will wind down its third visit to the Civic Theater Aug. 10. "Phantom" is a show-biz phenomenon, with magnificent music and some of the most lavish sets, costumes, and special effects ever created for the stage. Raab and Richard Todd Adams bring this production over the top.

And if that isn't enough Broadway magic for a single month, look for "Spring Awakening" (winner of eight Tony Awards) to light up the Balboa Theater Aug. 15-31. This provocative groundbreaking show celebrates the journey from youth to adulthood with choreography by Bill T. Jones. "Awakening" is a West Coast premiere, and it

should be another hot ticket.

Starlight will bring "My Fair Lady" to its outdoor setting Aug. 14. This masterpiece of musical theater by Lerner and Lowe will dominate the Starlight Bowl Aug. 14-31. Take the entire family to see the arrogant Prof. Higgins transform a Cockney flower girl into a fine lady – and enjoy its unforgettable songs and stunning period costumes.

Moonlight's 28th season continues with Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" through Aug. 10. This musical telling of the popular biblical tale will be followed Aug. 20 by the global sensation, "Les Miserables." What a coup for Moonlight to get "Les Miz," and what a treat for local theatergoers!

The Lamb's Players is performing "Boomers" (a lively musical revue about the baby boomer generation) at its newest venue, the Horton Grand Theater. "Boomers" should be spreading its effervescent brand of musical joy throughout the summer.

The Lamb's Coronado home was sitting pretty with "The Hit" (which had to be extended recently). However, "Pretty Fire" should be ready to take its place this month. "Pretty Fire," by Chadayne Woodard, is a coming-of-age story about faith and a young girl's delight in finding her true gift.

The North Coast Rep's West Coast premiere of "Madagascar" – a riveting tale about three Americans alone in a hotel room at different times – closes Aug. 3. If you can snare a ticket to this fascinating theatrical work before then, you'll be glad you did.

CCT is nicely ensconced at the East County Performing Arts Center with a rockin' new musical based on the classic story of "Alice in Wonderland." This wondrous new work is called "Alice." Check it out before Aug. 10. Following this new work, CCT will hark back to the Roarin' '20s for the delightful "Thoroughly Modern Millie" (Aug. 21-31).

Cygnets Theater will unveil the West Coast premiere of Adam Bock's "The Receptionist" Aug. 2 for a monthlong run on the Rolando Stage. Described as a cross between "The Office" and "The Twilight Zone," "The Receptionist" sounds intriguing. The talented Sean Murray directed the show.

The Museum of Contemporary Art is lighting up its La Jolla location with "Elusive Signs: Bruce Nauman Works with Light." The show will dazzle audiences until Aug. 31. "Memory is your Image of Perfection" (featuring feminist photographic artists) opens Aug. 3, and "Human/Nature: Artists Respond to a Changing Planet" (arriving Aug. 17) will use contemporary art to investigate the relationships between natural environments and human culture.

Mystery Café continues its comedy-mystery dinner theater shows at the Imperial House all summer, but the company also offers its summer-only mystery cruises along Mission Bay in August. ☼

Such a Pleasure!

Rediscover another classic comedy at The Old Globe

You've got about another week or so before the curtain goes down on the delightfully entertaining stage production of *The Pleasure of His Company* at The Old Globe Theatre.

Director Darko Tresnjak, who entertained Globe audiences last summer with the smash hit revival *Bell, Book, and Candle*, has rediscovered another classic comedy. A hit on Broadway and a memorable film starring Fred Astaire and Debbie Reynolds, *The Pleasure of His Company* is a wonderful comedic romp about young love, family expectations and the promise of life-long dreams fulfilled. Young Jessica Poole is about to marry a dashing young rancher, and as the family makes their final wedding preparations, Jessica's long-lost playboy father unexpectedly returns from abroad to walk her down the aisle, throwing the entire household into disarray. Starring Broadway's Patrick Page (*Dancing in the Dark*, *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*) as the irresistible Biddeford Poole, and set in a



The Pleasure of His Company at The Old Globe Theatre.

gorgeous Presidio home overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge, this stylish and endearing comedy is sure to delight and amuse. The play is scheduled to run through August 10.

About The Old Globe

The internationally-acclaimed, Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the most renowned regional theatres in the country, and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for over 70 years. The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 15 plays and musicals on its three stages, including its highly-regarded Shakespeare festival. The Globe has become a gathering place for leading theatre artists from around the world, such as Tom Stoppard, Daniel Sullivan and Chita Rivera, among many others. Numerous Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Full Monty* and *Damn Yankees* have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theatres across the country.

If You Go — THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY at The Old Globe Theatre. Show times are 8 pm. The Old Globe is located in Balboa Park off El Prado, between the San Diego Museum of Art and the Museum of Man. For more information and tickets visit TheOldGlobe.org or phone 619.23.GLOBE.

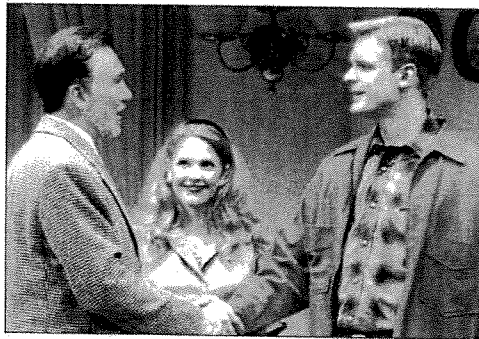
The bridge in Balboa Park: Golden Gate to another time and place

By CHARLENE BALDRIDGE | VILLAGE NEWS

When patrons enter the Old Globe Theatre for Samuel Taylor's 1958 Broadway comedy "The Pleasure of His Company," the first thing they see is a lovely show curtain with mimosas painted on it. That curtain rises to reveal a picture-frame scrim, through which we see the living room of a beautiful old home built in 1880, and beyond, the room's spectacular view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Off to the right is a solarium and to the left, the home's entrance and ascending, a grand staircase with a landing from which one can see everyone below. That's the picture painted by scenic designer Alexander Dodge and lighting director York Kennedy. Soon, there will be a parade of '50s attire designed by Fabio Toblino, plus foghorns and more, courtesy of sound designer Paul Peterson.

Resident artistic director Darko Tresnjak has evoked time (1958) and place enough to remind one of the production capabilities and sensibilities of this fine regional theater: What else? Is the play merely a frothy period comedy? After all, the playwright had an assist from Cornelia Otis Skinner, who created the role of San Francisco socialite Katherine Dougherty (here played by Ellen Karas), who is deep in the throes of planning daughter Jessica Poole's (Erin Chambers) wedding.

The play may certainly be appreciated for its surface charm, gorgeous setting and witty repartee. It's likely that many will choose to see it that way. But for rebels that were raised in the era and in similar privileged circumstances, the script has a deeper resonance. Just below the surface froth and frills, Taylor and Skinner question the practices and priorities a society just beginning to ask itself if debutante balls, clubs, good works and



Patrick Page (from left) as Biddeford Poole, Erin Chambers as Jessica Poole and Matt Biedel as Roger Henderson in The Old Globe's "The Pleasure of His Company," through Aug. 10.

PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ

trips to the Continent are enough. The most important question: should a young woman marry and settle into such a life before she discovers who she is?

The questioners are Mr. Pleasure himself, Katherine's ex-husband and Jessica's father, Biddeford Poole (Patrick Page), a rakish international playboy recently divorced from wife number three, and Katherine's father, Mackenzie Savage (Ned Schmidtke), an aged, philosophic curmudgeon.

Biddeford arrives unexpectedly for Jessica's wedding and settles into a room with a view. Intentionally or not, he upsets Katherine, her husband (Jim Abele) and Roger (Matt Biedel), Jessica's gauche but earnest cattle-rancher fiancé. Though he threatens the equilibrium of family and society, Biddeford instantly charms Jessica, whom he hasn't seen in 15 years, and establishes rapport with Toi (Sab Shimono), the family's invaluable (and excruciatingly funny) servant.

Any production that features the likes of Page, Shimono and Schmidtke is in good hands, and Tresnjak proves once again his flair for comedy. This production is anything but his and the Shakespeare Festival's poor relation. The women are sleek and well coiffed; the gentlemen are elegant; and the 11th hour mother-daughter confrontation is excellent. However, it is a challenge in certain scenes to catch the women's dialogue. It happens on these large sets and with actors primarily occupied in film and television, and it is a problem that needs to be addressed.

"The Pleasure of His Company" continues at 7 p.m. Sunday; 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday; and

septets straight out of Puccini. Marni Raab is an outstanding Christine (the Phantom's protégée) and Greg Mills does what he can with the role of Raoul, her suitor. "The Phantom of the Opera" continues at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8

p.m. Friday, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday and 1 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday through Aug. 10 at the Civic Theatre, 3rd and B St. For tickets (\$19-\$127), visit www.broadwaysd.com or call (619) 570-1100 or (619) 220-TIXS. ☼



It's a pleasure

Beneath surface charm, "The Pleasure of His Company" speaks to deeper questions of space and place. 13

2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, through Aug. 10 at the Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park. For information, visit www.theoldglobe.org or call (619) 23-GLOBE.

Still time to see 'Phantom'

Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1986 Broadway musical "The Phantom of the Opera" hit San Diego's Broadway/San Diego for the first time in nine years, and not a moment too late. Weary as one is of the hit tune ("Music of the Night") and its numerous reprises and permutations in other numbers (did you ever notice that the melody repeats in "All I Ask of You"?), one admits to being taken as never before by the voices, the opulent costumes and the clever grand opera parodies.

Numerous Phantoms clamor for recollection, including Michael Crawford, Davis Gaines (the best), Robert Guillaume (the worst) and the film's Glasgow-born rock singer, Gerard Butler. The voice of the current Phantom, lithe Richard Todd Adams, borders on the true tenor range rather than the usual high baritone. This makes the Phantom's topmost range easier, though on July 19 Adams was not without strain. Thank god for microphones and loud orchestrations: they cover a multitude of sins that true opera singers, who are never amplified (except Andrea Bocelli, and that's a gimmick) could never camouflage.

The rest of the leads are outstanding, too, especially John Whitney as the operatic tenor Ubaldo Piangi and his foil Kim Stengel as operatic diva suprema Carlotta Giudicelli. Both star in the Paris Opera parody productions, "Hannibal" and "The Triumph of Don Juan," and participate in two