

# NEWS

GOLDEN RAIN

January 31, 2013

*“Around the World in 80 Days” an adaptation of the novel by Jules Verne, adapted for the stage by Mark Brown. Now playing at the International City Theatre, 300 East Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, through February 17, 562-436-4610, [www.InternationalCityTheatre.org](http://www.InternationalCityTheatre.org); Ticket prices: \$38 - \$45.*

When film left the silent area and started “talking,” there was a scramble in Hollywood for written material. The Broadway stage was sacked of its writers for the large sums Hollywood was paying. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, the situation started to reverse. Now the stage, just as often, adapts films into stage versions. There are many bad ones, but International City Theatre (ICT) is presenting one of the better ones in Mark Brown’s adaptation of Jules Verne’s “Around the World in 80 Days”. It is a delightful start to the new season at ICT.

The time and place is London in 1872. Phileas Fogg (Jud V. Williford) is a stereotypical Englishman. Events in his day are set down to the minute, ie, when to shave, when to eat, the exact temperature of shaving water, the preparation of food, etc. It is difficult for him to keep hired servants. Into his life come the Frenchman, Passepartout (Michael Uribes). Where Fogg is totally inflexible, the comical Passepartout is the opposite.

At his private club, the Reform Club, Fogg engages in an argument with other members about an article in the London Times that says it is now possible to circle the globe in 80 days. The argument develops into a wager of £20,000 for Fogg to prove it can be done. He rushes home, picks up Passepartout, and they and we are off for a road trip adventure.

Coincidentally, on the day that Fogg and Passepartout leave London, there has been a large bank robbery. The description of the robbers fits Fogg. Detective Fix (Bran Stanton) is convinced that Fogg is the bank robber. He is off in pursuit, but can’t produce the proper warrant and Fogg is across the English Channel into France with Fix giving chase.

Their route takes them through Europe, along the Suez Canal, Bombay, Calcutta, Hong Kong, Yokohama, San Francisco, New York, and finally landing back in London. Along the way they rescue an Indian woman Aouda (Melinda Porto) from being sacrificed, weather a typhoon in the China Seas, dodge death from attacks by Native Americans, and generally have more adventures in those 80 days that most people have in a lifetime.

Adapted from the novel by Jules Verne, this production is what a professor I had in college would have called “theatrical”. The stage is empty except for platforms, chairs, various props, and a world map to show the group’s progress. The use of props and costumes invoke the audience’s imagination as elephants and typhoons are presented on stage. If you join into the fun with the actors you will be transported into the world of Jules Verne in this engaging production.

Recently watching the 1956 film I found it dated in its political incorrectness, which was common in Hollywood at that time. There is no political incorrectness here, displaying the story is a good as light as probably is possible.

The ensemble actors of five are all enjoying themselves and the enjoyment is infectious. Directed with skill and precision by Allison Bibicoff, there are many pleasant surprises along this road trip of all road trips.

As the pool of new writers seems to get smaller and smaller there will be more adaptations of classic stories like “Around the World in 80 Days”. When they are done with the skill and enthusiasm as shown in this production, then they are a welcome sight to sit and relax and have some good laughs. – *Larry Blake*