



LA STAGE

November/December 2007

Grand Delusion: A Black Comedy

By David C. Nichols

DAVID ROCK'S *GRAND DELUSION*, opening Nov. 17 at The Lost Studio, is a pitch black comedy about an imagined secret confab of world leaders who convene and conspire during the last days before World War I. The cast includes Kurt Fuller, Xander Berkeley and Timothy Omundson.

NYU Tisch School graduate Rock has had three of his plays produced by his alma mater New World School of the Arts. "I started thinking about this as a subject three or so years ago," he recalls. "I sort of pecked away at it and then I got serious about it."

The title is a riff on Jean Renoir's classic film *Grand Illusion*, although *Delusion* is somewhat "inspired by the book *Guns of August* by Barbara Tuchman, the first book I read on the subject. It opens at the funeral of England's King Edward II. It talks about the Kaiser and Tsar Nicholas II, and they're actually funny in their arrogance and their pretensions and their delusions. Kaiser Wilhelm was one of the craziest persons in history. Renoir actually got the idea for his film from an English book about why there shouldn't be war. In fact, before World War I, there was space for a summit to occur but it didn't seem to be a priority."

Rock, a founding member of the LA comedy troupe The Schmendrix, points out, "I'm a comedy writer. That's what I do. But here, it's this serious story only with all these crazy people.

It's going to be played extremely dramatically because we want the comedy to come naturally from the situation." I note that it sounds like *Dr. Strangelove* and Rock exclaims, "That is exactly what we're going for. Larry Biederman, our director, is an extremely funny guy and he's very clever in how he gets the actors to do what he wants while letting them find it on their own."

As for the wartime setting, Rock is adamant that *Delusion* is "not an analogy to today but it is timely. I don't like plays that are polemics. Hopefully, you can walk into this play, not know anything about World War I, and still become caught up in it." ■

GRAND DELUSION

Opens Nov. 17; plays Fri.-Sat., 8 pm; Sun., 4 pm; through Dec. 15
Tickets: \$20
The Lost Studio
130 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles
323.960.4441 or www.reddogsquadron.com



(top to bottom) Kurt Fuller, Xander Berkeley and Timothy Omundson in *Grand Delusion*

ALAN LOAYZA