

REVIEW

Theater Review (LA): *The Letters* by John W. Lowell at the Andak Stage Company.

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The Andak Stage Company is one of the best companies in town. They make up for their size (30 seats maybe) with quality. Their work is always first-rate.

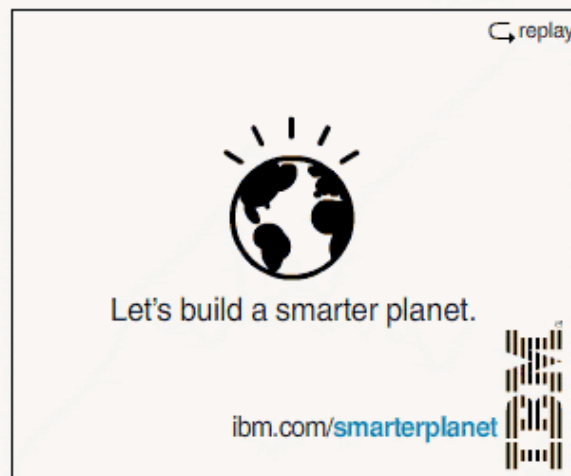
The current offering, a world premiere of *The Letters* by John W. Lowell, is no exception. It's a slight chamber piece but full of intrigue and suspense. It involves the struggle between a Russian official in the Ministry of Information (better called disinformation) and a female employee. It involves a fight to the death using innuendo, guilt by association, lying, manipulation, and treachery. I loved it because it always kept you guessing.

It is the job of this particular ministry to take embarrassing facts, news, letters, and scandals and cleanse them for the sake of the government. While it makes you glad you are not living under Soviet rule, there are enough manipulations and lies in our government today to satisfy someone seeking a modern reference. Unfortunately we still have branches of our government, secret and otherwise, whose job it is to twist the facts and mislead the people.

All the technical elements are professional and effective. The design makes do with little space to provide an office that is intimidating (with pictures of Stalin and Lenin on the walls) but also various acting areas created by the choice placement of a few chairs and a desk. The direction by Anne McNaughton, the Associate Artistic Director of the Andak Stage Company, is taut and provides constantly building tension while allowing a few laughs along the way. The writing by John W. Lowell is consistently believable and well structured.

The cast is phenomenal. Norman Snow is the smarmy, manipulative director of the ministry. The employee is the very talented Julia Fletcher, who shows surprising hidden strengths and guts. The cat and mouse game they play keeps us enthralled for a fast 90 minutes.

The Letters plays through April 19th at the [Andak Stage Company](#).



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