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Anatol still packs a punch

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These days, when anyone's bedroom can become an Internet sensation, there's something appealing about the refined eroticism of "Anatol" at Pacific Resident Theatre. Arthur Schnitzler's episodic look at sexual politics in fin de siecle Vienna may be faintly quaint, but its psychology holds firm.

Written in 1893, "Anatol" was the first play by Schnitzler, whose fascination with psychosexual behavior crystallized in his "Der Riegen" ("La Ronde"). Plotted in seven vignettes linked by self-adoring, self-deceptive Anatol (an expert Matt Letscher), the narrative hovers between elan and melancholy. Even as Anatol exults to confidant Max (Alex Enberg) about his latest love, he bemoans some other woman (it's a wonder he can keep track).

Appropriately, a near-nude female posed high above designer Laura Fine's fine Klimt-tinged set precedes each segment. This charming revival fields the reversals in Carl Mueller's light-fingered translation with assurance, and director Dan Bonnell weaves a bevy of amorous foils around Letscher's delightful roue. Rachel Avery makes a pert subject of hypnosis, and Ginna Carter's after-hours supper date cracks up the house. Ursula Brooks and Martha Hackett are complementary married targets, just as Shiva Rose's secretive fiancée and Valerie Dillman's predatory mistress are flip sides of the same fascinating coin. Angela Wiggins (in for Judith Scott) as the circus star who cannot recall Anatol, Andrew Ebert's waiter and William Lithgow's valet complete the cast.

Luxuriating in Audrey Eisner's elegant costumes, lighted by Jeremy Pivnick with evocative skill, this accomplished crew attends to cafe society strategies with waltzing aplomb. The detailed subtext unnecessarily lengthens some sequences, and certain aspects will raise feminist eyebrows. Still, the tone is correctly ambivalent, and if "Anatol" doesn't seduce you, don't expect him to shoulder the blame.