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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2006

"The Coast Of Utopia" Begins Previews

Tom Stoppard's epic three play story of 19th century Russia begins previews at Lincoln Center. [The NYT has a story just about the logistics of the damn thing](#) and how difficult it is to arrange rehearsal times and making sure understudies for one part don't appear onstage with themselves in another role and on and on. [Even the NY Post is talking about the show's epic scope](#). I saw the entire thing in one gulp in London (it was one VERY long day) and enjoyed it immensely. But I'm a bit worried about their decision to treat each play individually and make it impossible for anyone to see all three in short order except for about 6 weeks at the end of its run early next year. I don't think you can ENJOY them until seeing all three, though the first does sort of stand on its own. More significantly, one of the great joys of the London production was watching one lead actor (who I think tackled the same role as Ethan Hawke will). In the first play, I thought he was merely good. But when I saw the second and third pieces, I realized he was building his character's story over all three plays. He was willing to risk having someone who just saw the first play think he wasn't doing very much and really hitting just one note because he knew what was coming in the second and third plays. Holding back like that made his growth all the more moving and memorable when it came. And when does an actor get a chance to build a performance over three different plays and almost 9 hours of performance? If they take the same tack in this production, no one will know what he's doing until the whole thing is almost over.

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 12:00 PM



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