

**Current Reviews**[Cat On A Hot Tin Roof](#)[Clue, The Musical](#)[Crazy for You](#)[Deathtrap](#)[Diversions and Delights](#)[Footloose the Musical](#)[Frankie and Johnny In The Claire De Lune](#)[The Perfect Party](#)**Frankie and Johnny In The Claire De Lune****Reviewed by Holly Bartges**

"Frankie and Johnny were lovers, and lordy how they could love..."

No, not that Frankie and Johnny, another set of isolated damaged losers brought riveting to life by two stunning actors Emily Paton Davies and Thomas Borrillo for Paragon Theatre's production of *Frankie and Johnny In The Clair De Lune* now playing at The Phoenix Theatre.

A smash 1987 Broadway hit, Terrence McNally's raw, poignant comedy cuts to the quick with old worn out jokes that take on new life because of Davies and Borrillo. These two climb inside the skins and souls of these two characters who have been cut off of mainstream society as well as being cut off from themselves. Their personas wear personas as band-aids for protection from crushing blows both fielded in the past.

It forever astonishes how frequently theatre companies chose their play schedules independently a year and sometimes two years in advance. All too often different theatres will schedule plays with the same theme running at the same time.

In this particular case while Frankie and Johnny hunker down for Paragon, *The Subject Was Roses* plays at the Arvada Center. Both taking a hard, humorous, biting look at what it means to be a human being, and how diligently or not so diligently particular characters tackle the what, when, how, and why.

Perceptively and tightly directed by Michael Stricker on a set designed by David LaFont representing a run-down cheaply decorated, New York City apartment. A sofa bed gives Frankie a living room and bedroom all in one, while her television set sits on a table comprised of old telephone books. A waitress having been tossed about from abuse and neglect drags her self-esteem behind her with heavy chains.

Johnny, a short order cook at the same restaurant isn't far behind her with a past that includes jail and a failed marriage. He's built a protective wall of fast talking bravado, while she hides behind a cynical philosophy of aloofness pretending she doesn't care.

Her desperation shows through her no caring, his anxieties peak over his bravado. It took him quite a while to gather the courage to ask her out on a date to dinner, a movie, and hopefully a one-night stand with the undercover hope that might lead to something more. He sees something in her she doesn't see, which frightens her.

McNally's brilliant, honest, realistic writing cuts deep with recognizable humor sparked by fear, anxiety, a deep wanting, and protective insulation. Some of the jokes can be anticipated, but their delivery, in character, by Davies and Borrillo provide just what one would expect from Frankie and Johnny.

Their sex is satisfyingly good in the dark from blinded eyes, but in the light when they need to actually look at each other in their uncomfortable skins, the story takes a different turn. They lie. They concoct unnerving answers. Borrillo sits on the edge of his eyelids in hope and anticipation for Johnny's desperate wanting to win over Frankie. His anticipation, his eagerness, frightens Frankie, and in her fear orders him to get out. He is not staying the night. His Refusing to leave frightens her even more along with her desperate wanting to be important to someone, to be loved.

Davies and Borrillo are electric with sizzling energy. That begs for attention, warding off attention at the same time. Their nudity reveals a great deal about these two individuals. (Sometimes nudity doesn't reveal anything of particular value). Of course, she wants him to look at her, appreciate her, even though she struggles over a turmoiled thought process of embarrassment.

**Location****Paragon Theatre**

**Company:** Phoenix Theatre  
1124 Santa Fe Drive;  
Denver, Colorado

**When**

Thursday-Saturday: 7:31 PM

**Dates**

Now showing through  
March 10, 2007

**Tickets**

\$19.00 General Admission, \$15.00 Students/Seniors

**Reservations**

Box Office: (303) 300-2210 or

[www.paragontheatre.com](http://www.paragontheatre.com)

Debussy's Clair De Lune played on the radio by a disc jockey who thinks the names are a joke, and yet can't get Johnny's call out of his head, plays a vital role in the crackling scenario tumbling between the two. Unfamiliar with the music, not even knowing its name, the music provides a calming affect, which the two cling to in quiet desperation. For a few moments, Frankie and Johnnie share a moment of trust when they allow themselves to fall into the music. It's a beginning, and that's what counts.

Jacob M. Welch's carefully constructed lighting design reflects the emotional roller coaster journey carrying Frankie and Johnny backwards, sideways and upside down, as well as carefully, meticulously straight ahead.

Through the concocted stories, deliberate lies, Johnny's fierce determination, and Frankie's rattled soul, they discover moments of honesty, a spark of possibility, and a hope peaking through the stubbornness.

Speaking directly to a basic human condition, *Frankie and Johnny In The Clair De Lune* demonstrate the value of working through anxiety-ridden moments, discovering a kernel of something as they tentatively peel away the onion, whether in the kitchen or in the bed.

Thought-provoking while standing side-by-side laughability, Paragon's production of *Frankie and Johnny In The Clair De Lune* keeps the theatre's quality riding high. If I were of the ilk to give points for production quality based on a 1 to 4 scale, this show rates an 8.

Stunning, awesome and honest in its depth, this production is simply not to be missed. This isn't just about human natures and what it means to be human, it is an "us" story that involves every one of us on one level or another whether anyone wants to admit it or not. It speaks with vibrant electricity because of Stricker, Davies and Borrillo, and, of course, the man himself, McNally.

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