

"The Star without a Name"

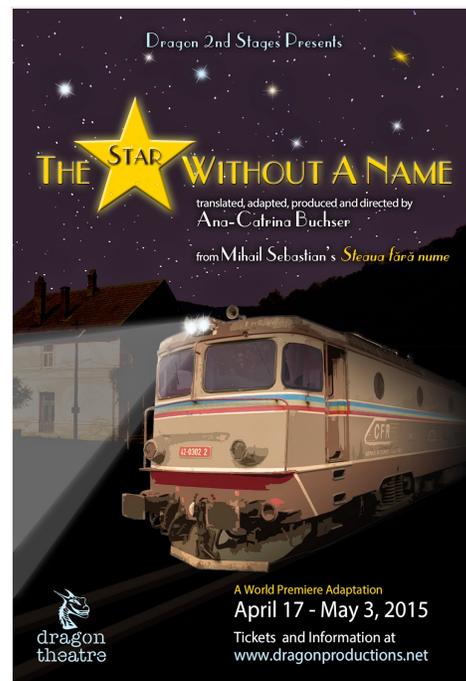
The Star without a Name

*Translated & Adapted by Ana-Catrina Buchser
from Mihail Sebastian's*

Steaua fara nume

Dragon 2nd Stages

*In a small Romanian, 1942 town, life is as routine and predictable as the trains that daily speed by, only occasionally pausing just long enough to drop off passenger and package at its tiny, one-desk station. On one otherwise normal evening, a beautiful, young woman in sheer-cut evening dress finds herself tossed off an express train for having no fare by an indignant conductor into the exasperated (but also excited) hands of the town's four-eyed trainmaster. Unwilling to cooperate and provide any identification or explanation, the high-heeled, nameless starlet finds herself in this no-name town in the middle of forest and night with no money in her jeweled purse and quite ready to end it all sitting depressed on the train tracks (if only another train would come along now instead of hours from now). Enter an equally young and handsome, school teacher of the nearby girl's school who has come to retrieve a long-sought, rare book on astronomy delivered by an earlier train. In seeing the mysterious girl's desperation, he insists she spend the night (without him) in his house; and she reluctantly agrees. Sprinkle in a few eccentric, stock-character townspeople who drop by the station amidst this unusual wrinkle in the nightly schedule of the town; and the First Act of the reportedly two-hour, fifteen-minute *The Star without a Name* ends in all of a half hour to the surprise of an audience who does not know*



whether to clap, shrug, or leave.

Much of the intermission becomes a show in itself as various actors and stagehands bring out boxes and boxes of books and create stacks whose jumble soon define the one-bed abode of our professor. As Act Two gets underway, he and the still nameless and unexpected visitor trudge into his without water and electricity abode (after all, it is past 6 p.m. when the power station closes). But what has up to this point seemed to be dialogue and action that lost something in Ana-Catrina Buchser's newly translated adaptation of Romanian Mihail Sebastian's 1942 original begins to transform into a magical evening between this odd-matched couple, both of ginger hair and increasingly aroused natures. The attractively boyish, pleasantly awkward Professor (delightfully portrayed by Myles Rowland) is clearly both attracted to this nameless beauty now in his home and horrified each time she wanders over to his one, street-facing window that opens unto the small-town world of gossips and busy-bodies. The Unknown (as listed in the program and played by the tall and distinct Marjorie Hazeltine) toys coyishly with the professor, soon finding herself engrossed both by his looks and his knowledge as a sort of tour-guide of the starry sky above them. She uses her prowess (and her fear of the resident mouse) to persuade the professor indeed to spend the night in his home with her. For that one night, these two happen-stance lovers escape their boxed-in lives to traverse together a stellar landscape, making new discoveries in the sky and in themselves. Morning's light will bring others bursting into their one-night sanctuary who will shatter their naïve, nascent plans of a relationship with the realities of their very different worlds. But for those few minutes of the play and few hours of their co-existence, we and they find some joy and hope for their new beginnings.

For a small, community theatre company, staging this new adaptation of an unknown-to-American-audiences play is a noble effort. Translator, adapter, producer, and director Ana-Catrina Buchser is to be commended along with Dragon Productions for taking the risk. Certainly at times it

seems that some of the humor intended in the townspeople and some of the pace needed to keep the first act intact probably got lost in the translation process. However, the casting of the two leads and the direction of their one night together result in an evening of melancholic satisfaction.

Rating: 3 E's