

"It could have been written last week," says Sue Miner, who's directing the production by the sophomore company Glastonbury West. "The term Peter Pan Syndrome has come up in rehearsal. For sure, Anatol has commitment issues."

We meet the wealthy gadabout Anatol (John O'Callaghan) in seven short plays, each one featuring a woman who has captivated his heart or has ceased to. Throughout, Anatol banters with his friend Max (James Murray), with dialogue that at times reads like a more erudite version of *Wedding Crashers*.

Anatol's cinematic descendants have littered the screen in the 100 years since his debut, most notably Michael Caine's star-making *Alfie* (1966), remade last year with Jude Law, but also any number of films starring

Hugh Grant as a boy-man reckless with female hearts.

"I think 'we're all a bit like him,'" says Miner. "We all think the next time we fall in love, we're going to do it the right way. 'Okay, next time I won't lie. The next time, the moment we feel that it's going wrong, we'll say so.'" Miner feels that Anatol is addicted to the moment of falling in love, so that there's only boredom and disenchantment when the moment fades.

O'Callaghan says he plays Anatol as someone who truly loves each new woman. "People would analyze it and say he's not in love, but that's someone who's been through therapy, maybe," he says.

The reference to the couch is apt, because Schnitzler was developing his more psychological approach to char-

acter motivation even as countryman Sigmund Freud was building the theoretical framework for psychoanalysis.

But Schnitzler also introduced a class consciousness, portraying how male aristocrats preyed upon women from lower classes. In these plays, however, narcissistic Anatol mostly preys upon equals.

"These women are really at peace with themselves, socially and econom-

ically," says Miner. "And they're all fine without him, too." The women are played by a bevy of actresses better known for television work.

Miner feels that Anatol's aristocratic status actually lets him resonate with today's middle class. "He was considered an idler, and had a lot of time on his hands to get into trouble. I feel there's a similarity, in that we're all so spoiled in the world right now, the

[trivial] things we complain about."

For O'Callaghan, it's Anatol's romantic idiosyncracies that ring true across the century. "He keeps a lot of souvenirs and memories, locks of hair, and these days there's the Monica Lewinsky dress," he says. "I know people who sleep around and leave their underwear. I think it's all here, still today." ■

Email [letters@eye.net](mailto:letters@eye.net).