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Michael Giltz



Freelance writer and raconteur
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Theater: Brand New Shakespeare, The Scottish Play and Post-Apocalyptic Dancing!

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DOUBLE FALSEHOOD ** out of ***
MACBETH **
BETWEEN WORLDS/ENTRE MUNDOS * 1/2

DOUBLE FALSEHOOD **
CLASSIC STAGE COMPANY

Double Falsehood is a play that bids to join the Shakespearean canon. He might have co-written this short romance with John Fletcher under the title *Cardenio*, only to have it freely adapted by Lewis Theobald in the 1700s. Theobald himself claimed it was indeed based on manuscripts by Shakespeare for a play that was never mounted. If it is Shakespeare, it's

certainly thin stuff from late in his career, when he had run out of things to say.

The story echoes many earlier works with star-crossed lovers betrayed, a young woman disguised as a boy and so on. Henriquez is the prodigal son of a Duke. Henriquez tries to woo Violante and when she rebuffs him he turns to rape and violates her. Not satisfied, he also sends the lovelorn Julio off on an errand so Henriquez can woo Julio's true love Leonora. She's not won over, but her father -- realizing the prospects for the son of a Duke are much better than Julio's - is delighted.

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The women run off to the country, the brother of Henriquez finds all the mismatched lovers and brings them to court to sort the entire mess out. The happily paired Julio and Leonora are thrilled while Violante is forced to marry Henriquez, about the only option for a ravaged woman in that age.

The production by Brian Kulick is simple enough, employing giant rugs scattered across the stage that are moved about in combination to provide different groupings of actors at different points. No play needs any more if it's good and well performed. The thin *Double Falsehood* unfortunately is not, with the villain Henriquez simply being bad and getting his comeuppance in a rather routine manner. Most everyone in the cast has their ups and downs performance-wise, though the women fare especially poorly. They gesture and act out many of the phrases and ideas in their lines, the sort of movement that should have been scaled back or abandoned once they had the sense of the dialogue. The men aren't much better, with Slate Holmgren doing better early on as Henriquez before his villainy became so broad. The standouts are Philip Goodwin, bringing dignity and clarity to multiple roles and Clayton Apgar as Julio.

Who wrote the play is not as important as whether the play is any good. This production certainly doesn't reveal a long-lost treasure, whomever the author may be.

MACBETH **

THE DUKE ON 42ND ST.

Theater For A New Audience has had a wonderful run of clearly presented, illuminating Shakespearean plays, such as their *Othello* and *Hamlet* of recent times. Unfortunately, that is not the case for this under-rehearsed production directed by Arin Arbus that never comes into focus.

You know the play: Macbeth is victorious in battle and gets honors from his king, but that's not enough. With the tantalizing predictions of three witches and the poisonous urgings of his bloody wife pushing him on, Macbeth slaughters his way to the throne. Happiness does not ensue, for no sooner does he claim power than he fears it will all be lost.

The look is Scottish, with the set quite gloomy and all the men garbed in military attire. The three witches are played by men in full, barbaric *Braveheart* style -- their preening and would-be spookiness is just the first of a number of false notes, not helped by several members of the cast stumbling a bit on their lines. John Douglas Thompson has been truly excellent in *Othello* and *The Emperor Jones*, to name two recent triumphs. It's possible he'll find his way in a few weeks. But at the moment, Macbeth seems lost and weak from the very start. Annika Boras has the worst of it as Lady Macbeth. If this were the only production you saw, you'd never imagine she was a major character and certainly never think she had any spine or drove her husband to the deed. Her mad scene is more Ophelia than Lady Macbeth, nutty rather than guilty.

When the main characters are not working, you often find secondary scenes feel fresher and more interesting. That's certainly the case here. The death of Macduff's wife and son (often cut from most productions) is the only one that gives us a sense of horror. And the meeting in which Malcolm (Justin Blanchard) and Macduff (Albert Jones) join forces to defeat Macbeth feels suddenly like the heart of the play. Peter Jay Fernandez is notably crisp and effective in various roles, a standout in a show where many of the performances feel rushed or ill-conceived. The second act is a little more energetic, thanks to those scenes in particular. But it's too little too late, just as Macbeth realizes too late that the promise "no man born of woman" can harm him doesn't mean he's impossible to defeat after all.

BETWEEN WORLDS/ENTRE MUNDOS * 1/2

NEW WORLD STAGES

In the future, environmental disasters destroy the world, reducing human life to a few scattered tribes fighting over precious water. The Flamenco tribe is lovely and beautiful, led by **Siudy**, the savior who is pure of heart and might save them all. The Urban tribe -- dressed like East Village punks because that's how the crazies always dress in a dystopia for some reason -- dance in a more hip-hop style and pound on drums. Siudy is captured by the Urban tribe and falls in love with Benjamin (played by Luke Mannikus), who betrayed her but loves her and maybe their love can save us all.



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That's the plot of this wordless bit of silliness. I probably wouldn't have sussed it out without a handy synopsis. The show is just an excuse for dancing and percussion. Too much of the flamenco dancing is done to backing tracks. It's much more effective when the dancers are performing along with a live singer and percussion onstage. The drumming is just less interesting retreads of ideas done better in *Stomp*. The leader of the Urbans "speaks" in a mechanized robotic voice intended for comic effect that gets old very quickly. And Act Two begins with a very tiresome drum solo that goes on for ages

Two vignettes stand out: the dance off between the two tribes uses the contrast of their styles nicely. And Study's big finale - the Dance Of Rain -- builds nicely. Mannikus has a casual magnetism that serves him well in his secondary role. Truly, this show is all about Study and **Study** is a work in progress. She's technically proficient, though I felt she lost the rhythm briefly in a section where she segued from finger-snapping in an elaborate style to palm clapping. But overall she simply doesn't yet command attention the way masters of flamenco do with ease. Our eyes are drawn all over the stage when they should be riveted on her. That may come with time; she's quite young after all. For the moment, *Between Worlds* is strictly for undemanding audiences looking for a plotless show they can watch without worrying about the dialogue.

THE 2010-2011 THEATER SEASON (ratings on a four star system)

- Angels in America revival at Signature *** out of ****
- Between Worlds/Entre Mundos * 1/2
- Beautiful Burnout at St. Ann's Warehouse **
- Blood From A Stone ** 1/2
- The Broadway Musicals Of 1921 at Town Hall ***
- Devil Boys From Beyond **
- The Diary Of A Madman with Geoffrey Rush at BAM ***
- Double Falsehood **
- The Dream Of The Burning Boy ** 1/2
- Driving Miss Daisy **
- Elf *
- Elling **
- A Free Man Of Color ** 1/2
- Gatz ***
- Ghetto Clown ***
- Good People with Frances McDormand **
- The Grand Manner **
- The Great Game ***
- Gruesome Playground Injuries ***
- The Hallway Trilogy: Nursing **
- The Hallway Trilogy: Paraffin ***
- The Hallway Trilogy: Rose ***
- The Importance Of Being Earnest ** 1/2
- The Interminable Suicide Of Gregory Church *** 1/2
- John Gabriel Borkman * 1/2
- La Bete ** 1/2



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[Small Craft Warnings zero stars](#)
[Three Sisters \(w Maggie Gyllenhaal and Peter Sarsgaard\)](#) *** 1/2
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AT THE NEW YORK MUSICAL FESTIVAL

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[Fingers and Toes](#) ** 1/2
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[Nighttime Traffic](#) **
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[Shine! The Horatio Alger Musical](#) ** 1/2
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Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of *Showbiz Sandbox*, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit [Michael Giltz at his website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also available for free on iTunes. Link to him on [Netflix](#) and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

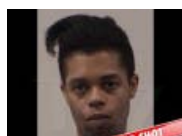
Note: Michael Giltz was provided with tickets to the shows with the understanding that he would be writing a review.

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