



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2018

MICHAEL GILTZ AT WORK

## THEATER: Mike Birbiglia's "New" Baby

**MIKE BIRBIGLIA'S "THE NEW ONE" \*\*\* out of \*\*\*\***  
**CORT THEATRE**

I want to know as little about a show as possible before I see it. This would be true even if I wasn't a critic. Ever since that Canadian kid visiting South Florida for the summer blurted out to me that Darth Vader was Luke Skywalker's father BEFORE I saw *The Empire Strikes Back*, I've been horrified by spoilers. ("Why? Why did you tell me?") Despite all this, I'm not a fanatic. On revivals, I'll perk up when hearing details about their approach to a show, like the recent Oklahoma at St. Ann's that included corn bread and chili during the interval and a general picnic-vibe. Cool!

So I've seen Mike Birbiglia before, I knew his new show was about becoming a father (the new one is a baby) and I heard...murmurings. Comments. By and large, his stand-up persona is to self-deprecate; most of Birbiglia's jokes are at his own expense, especially when detailing the myriad medical issues that have bedeviled him. So it seemed out of character for such an everyman, relatable guy, but I kept hearing he came across as a jerk. He crossed some line and risked people...well, it wasn't that they wouldn't like him. They would hate him. What a terrible person! Don't be that honest, Mike! WTF? What could he have possibly said?

Well, it's not a spoiler, so I won't feel bad in telling you that during his new show about being a new parent, Birbiglia confesses that being a parent is...really hard. Oh, he goes farther, but that's the gist of it. In fact, Birbiglia confesses it's so hard that -- and here he drops to that conspiratorial whisper where you imagine he's speaking to you and you alone -- that he understands why some men leave. (I'll admit, a small ripple of astonishment spread through the audience at the performance I attended.) Yeah, he gets it. Birbiglia immediately follows that "confession" with a reassurance. He doesn't mind telling us this because he knows: HE'LL NEVER LEAVE. Not a chance.



Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in NYC and can be reached at [mgiltz@pipeline.com](mailto:mgiltz@pipeline.com)

---

### FAVORITE LINKS

[Americablog](#)  
[Five O'Clock Lightning baseball blog](#)  
[Deep Pop -- Lori Lakin's Blog](#)  
[The Back Page -- Jason Page on ESPN Radio](#)  
[Cine-Blog -- George Robinson's Blog](#)  
[Documents On Art & Cinema - Daryl Chin's Blog](#)  
[Brucie G's Wondrous Blog Of Adventure and Mystery -- Bruce Greenspan's Blog](#)

---

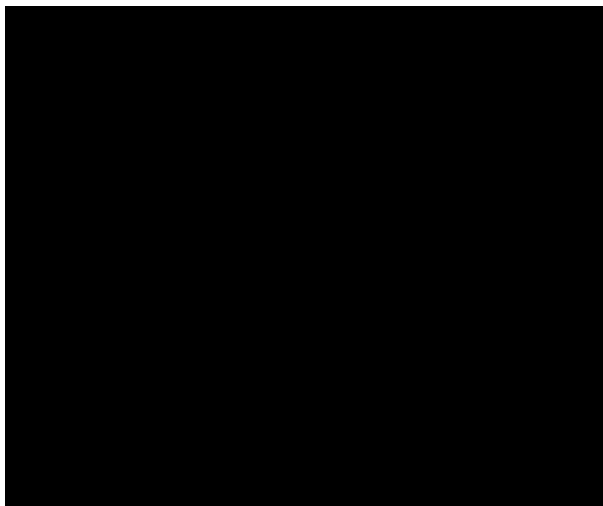
### BLOG ARCHIVE

► 2019 (7)  
▼ 2018 (34)  
    ► December (7)  
    ▼ November (4)

Well, if that's bold, someone should have told the classic original sitcom *Roseanne* or a thousand other TV shows where the parents cheerfully joked about dumping the kids and heading for the hills. Heck, even moms can feel sometimes it's a hell of a lot of work and they've considered tossing in the towel. (Of course, women abandoning their kids is somehow even more difficult for people to accept, much as they understand it intellectually.) Now remember, we're not talking about adults leaving their kids on the side of the road. We're talking about parents overwhelmed by the responsibility and admitting to themselves and each other, "Wow. This is hard."

I never would have thought this was Lenny Bruce territory, deeply confessional truth-telling that risked alienating an audience. And it wasn't. The show I saw was warmly embraced and ended on just the sort of awww emotional moment you saw coming a mile away but still sort of bought since we're all suckers when it comes to the emotional bond of parent and child.

[Here's Birbiglia on *Jimmy Kimmel* talking about his show.]



That's how the show ends. But it begins with a couch. In a nifty throughline, Birbiglia charts his maturity through his couch, which started with a beast he "rescued" off the street (his roommates gave him an "awesome" and a thumbs up) and then progressed to deciding he was going to go full adult and buy a new couch only to experience sticker shock and finally discovering his beloved favorite couch (the place he would collapse after weeks on the road doing standup) had been commandeered by "the new one." And God help him if he thought this was temporary.

Maturity becomes him, that's for certain. Birbiglia has a sad sack, Ray Romano sort of vibe (he must have turned down sitcoms by now) with his own sneaky delivery. He keeps calling his wife by the wrong name (a hilarious distillation of male indifference; "oh, it's our anniversary?"), bemoans any change, laughably thinks the fact that his wife saying

THEATER: Mike Birbiglia's  
"New" Baby

THEATER: The Irresistible Raul  
Esparza in "Arturo ...

THEATER: A Musical "King  
Kong?" Bananas!  
"American..."

THEATER: "Eve's Song"  
Preaches On The Original  
Sin...

- ▶ [October](#) (6)
- ▶ [September](#) (1)
- ▶ [May](#) (5)
- ▶ [April](#) (6)
- ▶ [March](#) (4)
- ▶ [February](#) (1)

- ▶ [2017](#) (6)
- ▶ [2016](#) (2)
- ▶ [2015](#) (14)
- ▶ [2014](#) (2)
- ▶ [2013](#) (5)
- ▶ [2012](#) (18)
- ▶ [2011](#) (15)
- ▶ [2010](#) (10)
- ▶ [2009](#) (43)
- ▶ [2008](#) (86)
- ▶ [2007](#) (781)
- ▶ [2006](#) (2412)
- ▶ [2005](#) (5)

---

she didn't want kids when they got married meant she would NEVER wants kids and generally rolls with the punches.

From frighteningly intrusive medical exams to discovering his sperm don't swim to realizing he is NOT the most important person in the room when the new one arrives, Birbiglia is in fine form. It's a story -- not stand-up -- and he is ably supported by the sneakily simple set of Beowulf Boritt, the lighting of Aaron Copp, the sound of Leon Rothenberg (nicely invisible but crucial) and director Seth Barrish to build the story and use his distinctive delivery (an offhand comment here, a mumbled punchline there) to share it rather than as a crutch. You're never waiting for the jokes, which makes the jokes all the more satisfying.

It's Mike Birbiglia's most satisfying show yet, which bodes well for his next piece, *The Terrible Twos*.

## THEATER OF 2018

Homelife/The Zoo Story (at Signature) \*\*\* out of \*\*\*\*

Escape To Margaritaville \*\*

Broadway By The Year: 1947 and 1966 \*\*\*

Lobby Hero \*\*\*

Frozen \*\*

Rocktopia \*

Angels in America \*\* 1/2

Mean Girls \*\* 1/2

The Sting \*\*

Mlima's Tale \*\* 1/2

Children Of A Lesser God \*\* 1/2

Sancho: An Act Of Remembrance \*\* 1/2

The Metromaniacs \*\*\*

Summer: The Donna Summer Musical \*

The Seafarer \*\*

Henry V (Public Mobile Unit w Zenzi Williams) \* 1/2

Saint Joan \*\*

Travesties \*\*\* 1/2

Summer and Smoke \*\* 1/2

My Fair Lady \*\* 1/2

Broadway By The Year: 1956 and 1975 \*\* 1/2

Bernhard/Hamlet \* 1/2

On Beckett \*\*\*

What The Constitution Means To Me \*\*

The Winning Side \*

Oklahoma \*\*

Mother Of The Maid \*

Love's Labour's Lost \*\* 1/2

The Lifespan of a Fact \*\*

India Pale Ale \*

Thunderbodies \*\*\*

The Ferryman \*\*\* 1/2

Eve's Song \*

King Kong \*

American Son \* 1/2

[The Resistible Rise Of Arturo Ui](#) \*\*\*

Mike Birbiglia's The New One \*\*\*

*Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the creator of [BookFilter](#), a book lover's best friend. It's a website that lets you browse for books online the way you do in a physical bookstore, provides comprehensive info on new releases every week in every category and offers passionate personal recommendations every step of the way. He's also the cohost of [Showbiz Sandbox](#), a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day with top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his website. Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called [Popsurfing](#) and also available for free on iTunes.*

POSTED BY [MICHAEL GILTZ](#) AT 2:53 PM 

---

**NO COMMENTS:**

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)