



TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2019

MICHAEL GILTZ AT WORK

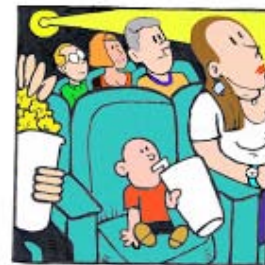
THEATER: THE PAIN OF "THE PAIN OF MY BELLIGERENCE"

THE PAIN OF MY BELLIGERENCE * out of ****
PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZON

What a baffling, inexplicable play. A man and a woman are on a date in a Japanese restaurant and it's a struggle to decide who you like less. The man (Hamish Linklater, doing his damndest with an awful role) is a walking billboard for "toxic masculinity." He's boorish, egotistical, pushy, physically aggressive, married, insulting and tiresomely boastful about it. You might say he's not one-tenth as charming as he thinks, but that would imply he actually thinks rather than merely acts on instinct. But the woman (Halley Feiffer)!! She's dithering, sad, painfully unconfident, incapable of speaking up for herself longer than a second or two and just...pathetic. You want to empathize with her of course, but that's trumped (yes, trumped) by your desire to shake her and say, "Get a hold of yourself!"

Naturally, you start to ask yourself questions. Are these two grotesque caricatures of these types? Should we be laughing at them? Will those grow more and more absurd? Will the blunt obviousness of the scene be amped up or toned down into something real? What the heck are we supposed to think about all this? Those are the sort of questions you ask yourself when absolutely nothing is going right in a show. The two characters aren't funny or real or satirical enough to hold our attention in the least and the date goes on and on.

Slowly, the play reveals itself. The overlong first scene is their date. The dull second scene takes place four years later, with the woman still having an affair with this married man. The final scene is a confrontation of sorts between the mistress and the wife. Worse, with a groan you realize the three scenes all take place on Presidential election nights: 2012, 2016 and 2020. (No word on who the Dem



Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in NYC and can be reached at mgiltz@pipeline.com

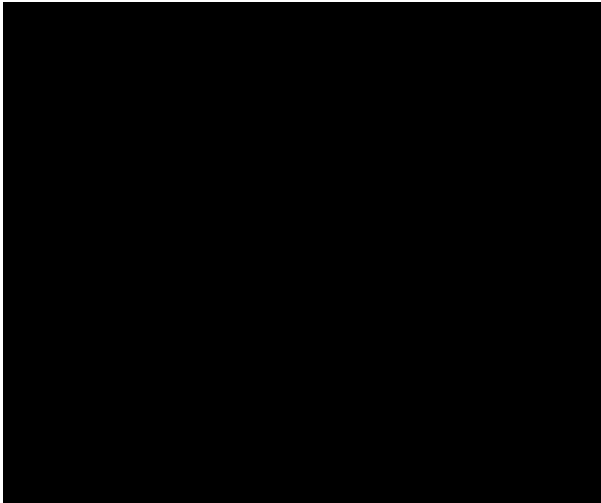
FAVORITE LINKS

[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 \(31\)](#)
▶ [June \(1\)](#)
▶ [May \(9\)](#)

nominee will be.) With the play failing to create a single interesting character, its attempt to hijack politics for a stab at significance lessens what was already a very poor affair.



When nothing is going right, it's hard for anyone to do good work. The three settings (Japanese restaurant, bedroom and living room) all blur together visually. The actors do what they can, with Linklater trying to inject some energy into a paper-thin conceit and Feiffer the actress surely wanting to have a talk with Feiffer the writer.

Without spoiling the entire plot, it's hard to describe just how perplexing the entire work proves from start to finish. When no one is believable, nothing makes sense. In the second scene, the two characters veer back and forth randomly from playful to bitter to tender, never at the same moment. But nothing tops our astonishment that they have been dating on the sly for four years. Four years? Nothing in the first scene would make you believe they would remain together for four hours, much less four years. And since the woman has been tragically stumped by a debilitating chronic illness, the idea that this man in particular would waste any time on her goes against everything we ever know about him,

Even that pales in comparison to the bewildering final scene. Bewilderment and perplexity, I hasten to add, are not the same as interest. You never wonder what the characters are thinking; you spend the entire evening wondering what the hell the playwright was thinking.

THEATER OF 2019

[Frankenstein: Under The Radar Fest at the Public](#) ** 1/2

[Minor Character: Under The Radar Festival at the Public](#) ***

[Ink: Under The Radar Festival at the Public](#) ** 1/2

[Choir Boy](#) ** 1/2

[White Noise](#) ** 1/2

▼ April (10)

THEATER: "INK" STAINED
WRETCHES GET THEIR
DUE

THEATER: "TOOTSIE" IS A
DRAG

THEATER: "ALL MY SONS"
LACKS A FAMILY

THEATER: "HADESTOWN"
FINDS HEAVEN ON
BROADWAY

THEATER: "BURN THIS"
BARELY SMOLDERS

THEATER: THE PAIN OF "THE
PAIN OF MY
BELLIGERENCE"...

THEATER: QUESTIONING
"SOCRATES"

THEATER: "OKLAHOMA!" IS
OK THE SECOND TIME
AROUND!...

THEATER: LESS IS MORE AT
"MRS. MURRAY'S
MENAGERIE"...

THEATER: "THE CRADLE
WILL ROCK" PUTS YOU TO
SLEEP

► March (5)

► February (1)

► January (5)

► 2018 (33)

► 2017 (6)

► 2016 (2)

► 2015 (17)

► 2014 (2)

► 2013 (5)

► 2012 (17)

► 2011 (15)

► 2010 (10)

► 2009 (43)

► 2008 (86)

► 2007 (781)

► 2006 (2412)

[Kiss Me, Kate](#) ***

[Ain't No Mo'](#) *** 1/2

[Ain't Too Proud](#) **

[The Cradle Will Rock](#) * 1/2

[Mrs. Murray's Menagerie](#) *** 1/2

[Oklahoma! \(on Broadway\)](#) ** 1/2

[Socrates](#) **

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 4:15 PM 

NO COMMENTS:

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

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