

A YEAR OF PLAYS

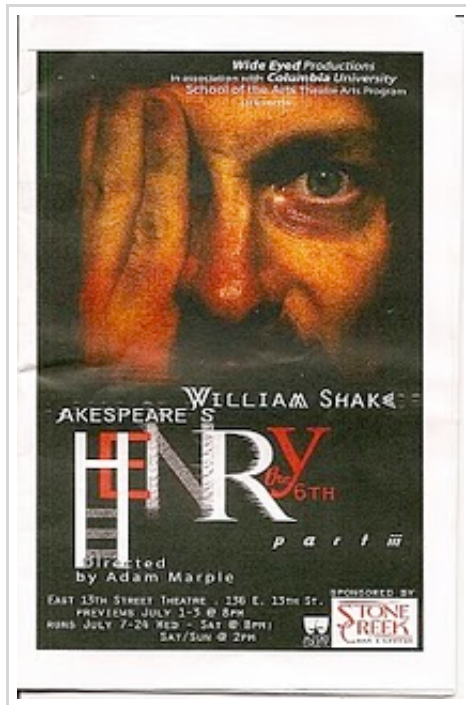
WRITING ABOUT ART WITHOUT REVIEWING IT. AND OTHER FUN STUFF.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2010

Henry VI, Part 3

Performance Date:

Wide Eyed Productions



You have to, you just have to. If you're doing an epic War of the Roses Shakespeare play, with all the battle and all the blood, with all the power that changes hands, with all that *drama* - you just *have* to do what Wide Eyed Productions did with *Henry VI Part 3*. You gotta go big. Go big or go home.

But how do you do that on a showcase budget? Wide Eyed did it like so:

With Actors Who Will Pretend Mightily

One my earliest and most influential acting teachers, Chris Herold, once said that to act is to "pretend mightily." I've always loved that phrase. It gets at that sense of *play*, reminding us of when we could spend hours fully absorbed in our make believe, but ennobles it somehow. It's that word - *mightily*. It takes the word "pretending," which can be used to dismiss acting as

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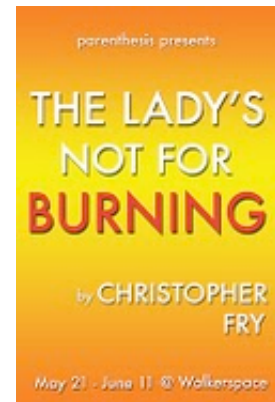
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COMING IN MAY 2011



Parenthesis Presents The Lady's Not for Burning by Christopher Fry

CHECK OUT OUR

deceptive, childish, or insubstantial, and gives it power. To pretend *mightily*.

As though the act of holding oneself within imaginary circumstances were a great test of will, requiring a person of extraordinary strength and admired ability. And so, in fact, it is.

Such admired actors, such mighty make believers, were among the huge cast of *Henry VI Part 3*. Rather than shy away from the dramatic tenor of the play, these actors immersed themselves in it. Rather than be embarrassed by the emotional hugeness of their characters, these actors embraced it. Rather than pull Shakespearean extremity down to a supposedly more modern size, these actors strove to fill it. And they did so by surrendering to the power of their imagination, with sincerity and seriousness. It was a welcome sight.

With Design that Does Double Duty

I love elegance and efficiency. And that's how I felt about the two major design elements of this play - a giant wooden chair and a huge wallpaper portrait. The chair - an enormous, tall, heavy-looking thing, with thick, square proportions - is first used as Henry's throne, which gets usurped again and again during the course of the play. Subsequently, however, the chair is moved, spun, laid on its back, on its side - and thus becomes a battlement, a molehill, a prayer bench. The best part though is that these transitions are accomplished by a lone chorus member, dressed ethereally in white, who effortlessly and balletically uses his body to leverage, twist, topple, and gently lay the chair in position. Just with that much, I'm counting four duties that chair is performing. 1) Looks beautiful and is good design. 2) Serves as actual throne. 3) Represents multiple non-throne objects and locations. 4) When moved, symbolizes the monarchy in this play, so easily manipulated, toppled, and repositioned.

Same with the wallpaper. It's an enormous photograph of Henry the Fifth, our Henry's dead father, blown up to larger-than-life, Lancaster-legacy-looming-over-your-son's-throne size and pasted on the back wall of the theater.

Already that wallpaper is 1) smart design, efficiently filling an otherwise empty space, and 2) communicating the circumstances of our current king's reign as the play begins. But then, at a key moment when the Lancaster power is crumbling, you hear this creepy, slow ripping sound, and you notice that our lone chorus member is up on a ladder tearing a great sheath of the Henry V wallpaper away. A chilling moment. And now the wallpaper 3) produces great sound effects, and 4) symbolizes the peeling away of Lancaster power. Pretty cool, huh?

With Direction that Dares

I can't remember if I've said this in another post, but I actually find it difficult to tell what counts as "direction" when I see a play. As an actor in

SISTER SITES

<http://parenthesistheater.com/>

<http://www.annaoliviamoore.com/>

SO WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS BLOG?

I was an actor who didn't see nearly enough theater. So with kudos to my brother, who earlier pioneered a similar venture for himself, I saw a play a week for a year.

This blog contains a depository for my thoughts during that Year of Plays -- August 23, 2009 to August 23, 2010. My intention during that year was to find out what I could learn from each piece I saw, to document my experience, and to contribute to a healthy and positive discourse about art and life. I sought to write about theater without reviewing it, and to enjoy myself in the process.

The original Year of Plays has now come to a close, but the blog continues with the same spirit yet an expanded focus, considering theater in all its many forms and interpretations.

BLOG ARCHIVE

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difficult to tell what counts as "direction" when I see a play. As an actor in the rehearsal room, I know very well what a director is responsible for in a production. It ranges from nearly everything to almost nothing, depending on your director. But when I take in a play I've nothing to do with, it's harder to determine whose ideas and choices and concepts I'm looking at. That said, I'm going to ascribe to the director of *Henry VI Part 3* the choices involved in the very last moment of the play.

But first, SPOILER ALERT. You can still see this show this weekend, so if you're going to go, stop reading now and experience the fun for yourself.

Again, SPOILER ALERT. Okay, last moments of the play. Henry is dead in the corner of stage, dripping with blood in a very awesome way that I won't describe in case you're still reading this even though you're going to see it and I said SPOILER ALERT. So stop reading now, for reals, because onto the otherwise open playing space now dashes Richard! - as in soon to be Richard the Third - butt naked! And brandishing a knife! He vaults himself around behind the giant chair, now laying on its side, and with a glorious spot bathing his muscley, Yorky arms in a sunny, summery light, he purrs [the first two lines of his own eponymous play](#). But wait! He's not done. Now he reaches down behind the chair with his knife, and you think *oh my god he's going to castrate himself* just as his arm gives a horrifyingly hidden *yank*. But instead of revealing an awful act of self-violence, he pulls out from behind the giant chair the throne's cushion. And with goey tension in his movement, he stabs the cushion with his knife, rips out some stuffing, coaxes a piece of it into his smugly smiling mouth, and commences on a nice... long... chew... as the lights slowly fade to black. WOW. I mean, wow. COME ON! You gotta *admire* that. I have no idea if this moment actually "works" and I really don't care. Because that's what I'm *talking* about right there! Go big or go home! The birth of a villain treated with unabashed theatricality and delivered with absolute commitment. Balls to the wall. (Not technically a cheap laugh since that phrase [does not actually refer to male anatomy](#).)

So that's my sermon for the day, ladies and gents. Pretend mightily. Be efficient and elegant. Go big or go home. Balls to the wall.

And that's all she wrote.

POSTED BY ANNA MOORE AT 12:36 PM 

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BUT WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO, ANNA?

Glad you asked.

Producing *The Lady's Not for Burning* by Christopher Fry in May 2011.

Founded new theater company, Parenthesis

Student Driver continues to perform regularly in NYC.

Went to Burning Man

New improv team *Student Driver* opened for Jen + Steve at the PIT

Performed at The PIT with



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improv team *Fletch*

Performed two workshop readings of *A Letter from Bataan*, a new play by Neal J. Freeman to which I contributed original source material

Performed as Lady Macbeth and Queen Gertrude for Brian Kulick's Shakespeare class at the Columbia MFA Directing Program

Returned to improv class at the PIT

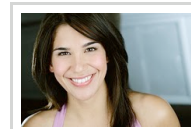
Appeared on "All My Children" playing Officer Torres, a Pine Valley cop in January 2010

Performed in Roland Topor's *Winter Under the Table* at the International Theatre Festival of Havana, Cuba with Infinite Stage

Shot an industrial for Bounty PaperTowels

Featured in HBO "Stay at Home" Promo with Flight of the Conchords in summer 2009

ABOUT ME



ANNA MOORE

An actor, writer, and producer

living in New York City.

Originally from California.
Doesn't know how much or
how little to include in this
space.

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Chavisory's Notebook

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no.**

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