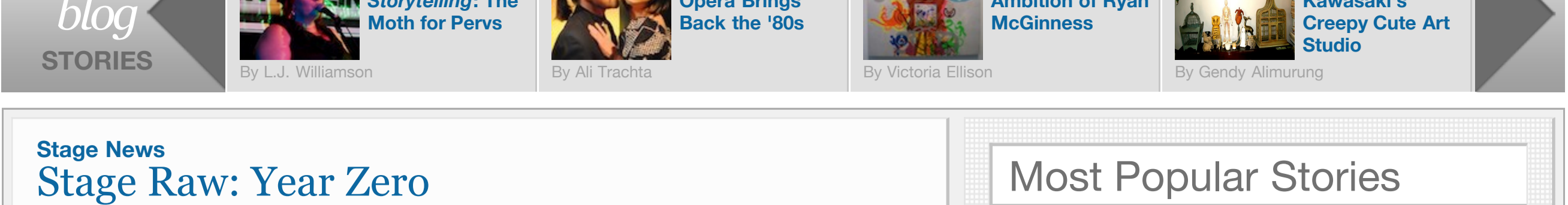


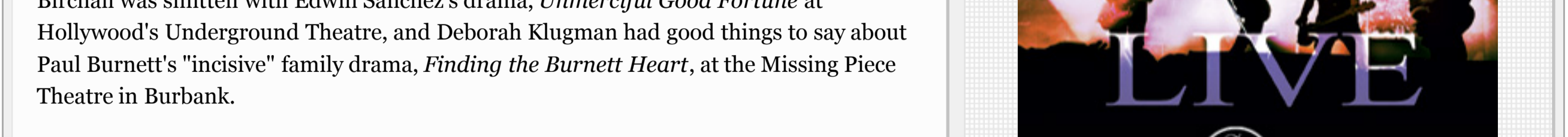
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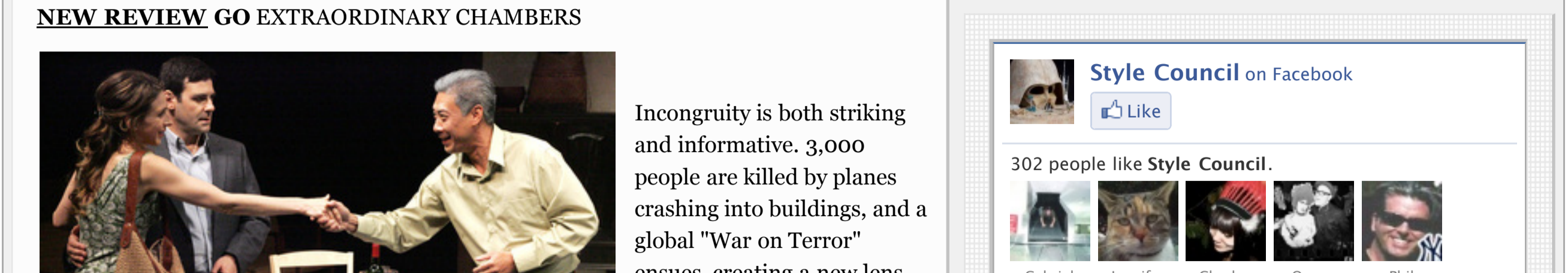


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Stage News Stage Raw: Year Zero By Steven Leigh Morris, Mon., Jun. 6 2011 at 11:07 PM Categories: Stage News



COMPREHENSIVE THEATER LISTINGS NEW THEATER REVIEWS Stage FEATURE on Jez Butterworth's Jerusalem, on Broadway



Year Zero Michael Lamont

Productions that garnered high praise this week are David Wiener's Extraordinary Chambers at the Geffen, about Americans in Cambodia, which Mayank Keshaviah describes as an 'edgy drama that strikingly conveys the weight of history.' The ghosts of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge also inform Michael Golamco's Year Zero, at the Colony Theatre in Burbank, described by Pauline Adamek as a 'tender story, filled with beautifully calibrated, incendiary performances.'

For all NEW THEATER REVIEWS seen over the weekend, press the More tab directly below.

NEW THEATER REVIEWS scheduled for publication June 9, 2011 NEW REVIEW GO EXTRAORDINARY CHAMBERS



Extraordinary Chambers Michael Lamont

Incongruity is both striking and informative. 3,000 people are killed by planes crashing into buildings, and a global 'War on Terror' ensues, creating a new lens through which the world is observed with fear and suspicion. Twenty-five years earlier and half a world away, two million people are massacred, wiping out one-fifth of a county's population, but nary a blip on the global consciousness.

NEW REVIEW FIFTH OF JULY It's 11 years after the Summer of Love and a band of former hippies are protesting - grousing, really -- about the fast-approaching decade of 1980s greed-bias capitalism. They've got a patriotism hangover that stretches back further than last night's booze binge: During the Vietnam war, Ken Talley (Scott Victor Nelson) lost his legs, his sister June (Jennifer Sorenson) lost her optimism, and their childhood friend John (Christopher Carver) lost, well, nothing since he married a daffy copper heiress and folk singer (Jen Albert) who whisked him to Europe and far away from the reach of the draft.

NEW REVIEW GO FINDING THE BURNETT HEART In playwright Paul Elliott's incisive drama, an already fractured family finally comes apart after the youngest member of the household, 16-year-old Tyler (Corey Craig), reveals that he's gay. The revelation takes place in the cramped bedroom he shares with his grandfather, James (James Handy), a mean-spirited widower temporarily boarding with his son's (Jeff L. Williams) family while the fire damage to his own home is being repaired. Though he loved his wife, James is otherwise a cold, stingy man who cruelly dissected his son's spirit and now aims a lacerating tongue at his grandson - a psychologically sturdy lad able to give as good as he gets.

NEW REVIEW IMAGOFEST 2011 The theme of this year's trio of original one-acts by the Stella Adler Los Angeles Theatre Collective is the complex, often contradictory motives and conflicted psychological undercurrents that complicate even the most seemingly straightforward of relationships. With 'Red Poppies' (directed by Yaitza Rivera), playwright Tim McNeil uses an unnamed, war-torn country and a funeral as the backdrop for a reunion of childhood sweethearts (Zulivet Diaz and Chervine Namani) separated by a brutal act of sexual violence and years of ensuing madness.

NEW REVIEW LAVENDAR LOVE Swanky period costumes lend luster to Odalys Nanin's indifferent comedy about a struggling actress who time travels back to 1920s Hollywood. Just split from her girlfriend, Alas (Lidia Ryan) is on the run from the police for stealing McNuggets; desperate, she dives into a secret passageway under the pavement and emerges into the luxurious digs of silent screen glamour queen, Alla Nazimova (Nanin). A closeted lesbian, Nazimova is frolicking with her latest amour (Stephanie Ann Saunders) while her just-for-show lover Paul Ivano (Drew Hinchley) gads about with Rudolf Valentino (Kristian Steel).

NEW REVIEW MOOSE ON THE LOOSE Back in the 1950s, the Tappino family left their home in Calabria, southern Italy, to search for work. They settled in Thunder Bay, in chilly northern Ontario, Canada, where the temperature often drops to minus-40 degrees. By 2001, they have become a large and obnoxious clan, headed by irascible patriarch Giuseppe (John Cygan) and his wife Maria (Connie Mellors). Their children include studious Joseph (Nick McDow), couch-potato Bruno and his Native American fiancée Honabiji (Jemma Bosch), touchy Carmela (Corinne Shor), her Anglo husband Darryl (Michael Lore), their young son Timothy (Grant Venable), and Giuseppe's other daughter Gina (playwright Dina Morrone). Also present are Maria's parents, garrulous Rodolfo (Jack Kutcher) and acerbic Pina (Laura James), whose acid comments provide much of the comedy. Morrone's play is clearly semi-autobiographical, inspired by her family, and the day a mouse wandered out of the bush and into a neighbor's backyard. Short on plot, the play centers on a big family dinner, and Giuseppe's ill-fated attempt to shoot the moose. It's a pleasantly old-fashioned family comedy, affectionately but keenly observed, and deftly directed by Peter Flood. Tom Badal plays both the talkative Moose and the local chief of police. Theatre West, 3333 Caluenga Boulevard West, L.A.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 2 p.m., thru July 10. (323) 851-7977. (Neal Weaver)

NEW REVIEW THE POOR OF NEW YORK Dion Boucicault's classic 19th century melodrama follows the travails of the Fairweather family, whose sea-captain patriarch is robbed of \$100,000 and then his life by the dastardly banker Gideon Bloodgood. Twenty years later Bloodgood's crime is brought to light to him. In program notes, director Larry Eisenberg explains his choice to avoid the contemporary mocking tone that melodramas are so often treated with, in favor of an honest re-actment of the emotion and sentiment - borrowing from the early 20th century sentimentality and 21st century acting styles keep clashing as the Poole and Juliana Olinka as mother and daughter Fairweather; and Van Boudreaux, who nearly channels Edward G. Robinson in a role both comic and heroic. Others such as Max Banzel as Alex Parker, try to mold themselves into similarly noble figures, but can't escape their young Hollywood hunkiness, which exposes a certain artifice. So the style keeps shifting away from any kind of unifying propulsion. Interesting projections mimicking '20s silent films keep the story grounded in a black and white past, but the accompanying old time movie theater music (sound design by Steve Shaw) that underscores the entire production seems haphazard and distracting rather than providing period and emotional cues. Of the designs, only Liz Nankin's costumes actually help the production. Lonny Chapman Group Repertory Theatre, 10900 Burbank Blvd., N. Hollywood; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; thru July 10. (818) 700-4878. thegrouprep.com. (Tom Provenzano)

SEX AND EDUCATION Lissa Davis' new High Coast premiere about a high school English teacher versus a jock. Fridays, Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Sundays, 4 p.m. Continues through July 10. Victory Theatre Center, 3326 W. Victory Blvd., Burbank, (818) 841-5421, thevictorytheatercenter.org. See Stage feature on Wednesday night.

NEW REVIEW GO In Edwin Sanchez's compelling drama, fast food worker Fatima (Melissa Camilo) is arrested for killing over 20 patrons using burgers laced with poison - "You want extra sauce with that?" However, as prosecutors start interrogating her, they discover the tough talking Bronx Puerto Rican gal is "blessed" with a supernatural talent that provides only too justifiable reasons for her doing what she's doing. Fatima also gradually develops a deeply D.A. assigned to interview her, whose own equanimity is frayed from tending to her dying and increasingly delusional mother (Marlene Forte). Sanchez's drama boasts the cracklingly taut dialogue of a Law and Order police procedural, but with a dash of Torchwood. The deft and often delicate writing boasts a thought-provokingly metaphysical debate on destiny and fate. If you know someone's future is dire, is it evil to offer a kinder, gentler way out? With the very recent death of Doctor "Death" Kevoorkian, these topics are more timely than ever, but director Jon Lawrence Rivera's evocative staging artfully mends dark humor and world weary melancholy in a production that never short-circuits the philosophical scenery's emotional and psychological underpinnings. The acting is especially engaging, from Camilo's terrifying, yet oddly vulnerable Fatima, an angry figure who could be either saint or demon, and to Santana's sad, brittle, seemingly out of her depth Maritza. Forte as the dying mother - bubbly and giggly as a school girl, and yet possessed of a gleeful malice as she spitefully pretends to be deluded - is both thrilling and disturbing. There are also fine supporting turns by Clay Buckner, as a weaselly lawyer, and by Jerry Oshinsky, as an embittered, boozy old DA. Dijo Productions at the Underground Theater, 1313 N. Wilton Pl., Hollywood; Mon.-Wed., 8 p.m. (added perf Sun. June 12, 3 p.m.) thru June 15. (800) 838-3006. brownpapertickets.com/event/179643. (Paul Birchall)

NEW REVIEW WORKING: THE MUSICAL A relentlessly patronizing tone nearly ruins all the fun in Steve Schwartz's musical about average Joes and Janes on the job, though some authentic moments of human experience manage to slip through the condescending cracks. The cast, however, isn't always up for the challenging task of taking the sentimental songs and monologues to humanizing heights. As a whole, the ensemble has too many ham-fisted moments to usher the stereotypical characters - a boorish iron worker (Tim Barquez) with a supposedly ironic love of books; a self-loathing housewife (Judi Stewart) chained to her laundry basket; a valet (Tyronne Washington) who, by golly, refuses to let a carpark rob him of his plainspoken pluck - to more meaningful ground. But a few stand-out performers spin their snatches of sloppily stitched material into meaningful musings on time-clock punching. Jill Kocalis Scott, for instance, successfully seeks out the joyful motivation of a sophisticated waitress in "It's an Art." Amanda Celine Miller goes from hooker to receptionist to cleaning lady with ease, crafting flesh-and-blood characters defined by toil. There's an undeniable pleasure in seeing everyday people take center stage, but the real blue collar trenches are certainly filled with more interesting men and women. The Tribe Productions at The Complex, 6476 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Fri.-Sun., 8 p.m.; thru July 10. (323) 960-5774. thetribeproductions.org. (By Any Lyons)

NEW REVIEW GO YEAR ZERO Anyone who thinks the Colony Theatre in Burbank only caters for the blue rinse set with safe, theatrical selections will be pleasantly surprised and refreshed by the first of this year's six-show season. Brilliantly directed by David Rose, Michael Golamco's play about a young med student and her teen-aged brother facing an uncertain and divided future is a tender story filled with beautifully calibrated, incendiary performances swirling around the psychological fallout from the Cambodian killing fields. Newly orphaned, Ra (Christine Corpuz) and Vuthy (David Huynh, giving a broad but convincing tenor performance) are the offspring of a recently deceased Cambodian refugee. It turns out these two knew little of their mother's grim fight for survival. Running a store in the Long Beach's Cambodian community, she concentrated on keeping her kids away from gangs and teen pregnancy. Young, ripped and inked up gang member Han (Tim Chiu) has just been sprung from prison, but he's no thug. Han remembers the Mother's kindness about the years and wants to help his neighbors, to "give back." But Ra is proud and thinks she can cope by sending her brother to live with an "Auntie" while she explores her studies at Berkeley. Vuthy is being bullied at school and looks to Han for advice. Succumbing to Han's fervent interest, Ra starts contemplating a future minus her milquetoast Chinese boyfriend (Eymard Cabling). Short but satisfying scenes glide by with the grace and precision of a figure skating, fuelled by Peter Skyring's contemporary, driving score. Colony Theatre, 555 N. Third St., Burbank; Thurs.-Sun., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; thru July 3. (818) 558-7000. colonytheatre.org (Pauline Adamek)

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