

CONVERGENCE THEATRE – SELECTED REVIEWS

“The buzz is justified — Convergence Theatre continues its reign of well-staged, thoughtful shows in intriguing locations.” ~ Mooney on Theatre

THE UNENDING

"Convergence Theatre continues to raise the bar on quality and excellence for independent theatre in this city. Creators and Co-Artistic Directors Julie Tepperman and Aaron Willis have created a company that pushes themselves and their audiences to expand their ideas of theatre; to explore and embrace theatre that is bracing, challenging and tremendous fun. Their site-specific discoveries will have you willingly going down dark alleyways if we know that at the end of the journey will be theatre that is as good as this evening is." ~ *Lynn Slotkin, The Slotkin Letter / CIUT 89.5 FM*

“This is a beautifully produced independent production, and a bold challenge. ...the play goes to a risky place of revelation and exposure, which the performers ably prove they have the chops to deliver. A superb and detailed level of production reveals a company hungry for challenge.” ~ *Karen Fricker, Toronto Star*

“A haunting collection of site-specific short dramas. There are fascinating echoes among the works, particularly in the use of confession and silence. Each performer gets a chance to shine.” ~ *NOW Magazine*

“The Unending is stunning, creative, unusual, immersive, brilliantly-acted...and sold out. If you caught it, you're lucky.” ~ *Intermission Magazine*

“The Unending is full of theatrical surprises, design gems, and excellent performances. ~ *Mooney on Theatre*

“The Unending is one of those rare pieces of theatre that will still be in conversation years from now. ...it is the most relevant play I have seen at the Toronto Fringe in recent years.” ~ *Ontario Arts Review*

“The Unending, under Aaron Willis’ direction, is galvanizing. Nick Blais’ set design and Michelle Tracey’s costume design are compellingly distinct (the set for Play is especially wonderful), making the connections between the three works incredibly evocative and intriguing.” ~ *My Entertainment World*

PASSION PLAY

“Passion Play, profound, undeniable unique... a homage to community-based theatre... this is a theatrical event you won’t want to miss.” ~ *The Globe and Mail*

“...a piece that Toronto will talk about for years to come... the milestone show of this decade will be Passion Play.” ~ *Charlbois Post*

“Undoubtedly the indie theatre event of the summer” ~ *The Toronto Star*

“A deeply moving piece of theatre, an ambitious co-pro that demonstrates the strength of Toronto’s indie community.” ~ *NOW Magazine*

“Indie theatre ascending to new heights.” ~ *The Grid*

“Poetic, political and passionately human, this is the show to see this month.” ~ *Theatromania*

“Want some badass epic indie theatre? Go see Passion Play!” ~ *Mooney on Theatre*

YICHUD (SECLUSION)

“*YICHUD (Seclusion)* is a huge, impressive accomplishment... When theatre is done well, the result is glorious. *YICHUD (Seclusion)* is done very, very well. I recommend it, very, very highly.... It’s to the great credit of playwright Julie Tepperman and her tremendous heart and intelligence that she creates a world and characters we can all identify with. ...By showing how deliberately isolated these people are...she is making a universal statement. ...Tepperman has a wonderful sense of dialogue, a terrific sense of humour, and tremendous compassion for her characters and that religious tradition. Coupled with that is a vibrant, lively moving production.” ~ *Lynn Slotkin, CBC RADIO: HERE & NOW*

“...the final episode with Chaim and Rachel is funny, warm and filled with a generosity of spirit sure to touch viewers of any background.” ~ *Jon Kaplan, NOW Magazine / Plays International*

“Moment by moment it’s well written and excellently acted.” ~ *Robert Cushman, National Post*

“...there’s something recognizable and relatable in every relationship in the play...by showing the real pains, tensions, and joys that come from observing seemingly rigid traditions in a modern world, *YICHUD (Seclusion)* offers a realistic look at love, marriage, and human relations that can be appreciated by Jews and non-Jews alike.” ~ *Miriam Cross, Shalom Life*

“...an off-Broadway run doesn’t seem like such a stretch.” ~ *Michael Kaminer, FORWARD New York City*

THE GLADSTONE VARIATIONS

NNNNN “You never knew the excitement you’d discover when you checked into this sold-out show – actually four different scripts which walked its audience through rooms in the historic Gladstone Hotel. Stairwells, bedrooms and even a tiny washroom offered surprise after surprise, with a first-rate cast ushering us into connected worlds of dreams, memories and lost loves.” ~ *Jon Kaplan, NOW MAGAZINE*

5 STARS “All four Variations unpack the lives of unwanted, marginal souls...*The Gladstone Variations* is an inventive team effort, where a historic building plays a big part in examining how hard it is to check out of the past.” ~ *Paul Gallant, EYE Weekly*

3.5 out of 4 STARS “...an ambitious undertaking requiring exacting precision, aimed at putting a new spin on the audience experience...The small audiences mean tickets are few. So if you’re lucky enough to snag one, put on a pair of comfy shoes and take the journey.” ~ *Bruce DeMara, TORONTO STAR*

“The amount of effort and ingenuity required to get all this synchronized is awe-inspiring... A Hotel worth checking out.” ~ *Robert Cushman, NATIONAL POST*

“...*The Gladstone Variations* are solidly scripted little tidbits that let the audience act as invisible voyeurs in a true to life performance space. With repeating characters and a performance plan that has the audience running all over the hotel inside and out, it feels more like being in a narrative theme park than watching a play.” ~ *Justin Haigh, PLAYS ON THE NET*

AUTOSHOW

“I loved it. It was a huge cast.... A lot of local writers get featured in this - it’s a great Toronto story.... A fascinating experience.” ~ *Marichka Melnyk, CBC RADIO: HERE & NOW*

NNNNN “...There’s a surprise around every turn in this unique theatrical experience, splendidly staged, filled with laughs and a few thoughtful, upsetting moments. One of the most adventurous shows this year” ~ *Jon Kaplan, NOW MAGAZINE*

CONVERGENCE THEATRE – AUDIENCE TESTIMONIALS

THE UNENDING:

"One of the freshest, most moving, wrenching pieces of immersive theatre I've seen. The Unending will crawl inside you like a worm inside an apple, and not let go."

~ Mitchell Cushman, Artistic Director, *Outside the March*

"I love how your company relishes words and language; the power of the word in the body and soul of an actor. So many contemporary theatre artists seem to despise the word, and the vision of a playwright, in favour of a circus-like dependence on visuals and acrobatic physicality. Images are powerful, yes, but the right word is worth a thousand pictures. I will promote your beautiful production."

~ Judith Thompson, playwright, actor & director

"Three incredible plays, beautifully executed and performed. I highly recommend you get yourself out to see this. It's special."

~ Paul Dunn, actor/playwright

"If you have emotions go see this show. It's one of the most remarkable pieces of theatre I've ever seen. Intelligent, intimate, emotional, and simply incredible."

~ Max Ackerman, theatre student, Sheridan/UTM

"If you care about story-telling, theatre, or investigation, see this. This is not a casual recommendation. If you miss this, you will have missed something world-changing."

~ Robin L. Ross, theatre graduate, Windsor University

PASSION PLAY:

"Despite threatening clouds, we were able to watch the Elizabethan portion in its outside location, with the sounds of children playing and dogs barking in the background, much like passion plays would have been performed from the Middle Ages. That was a singular treat. My friend and I both felt that we had a superb theatre experience. We marveled at the deftness of the actors' characterization of the various players, the skillful way the company moved from broad humour to subtle, sad lyricism. I am ever so glad to have seen Passion Play and you can be certain I will attend future productions."

~ Kathleen Gallivan, patron

"What an ambitious undertaking - positively epic - and you pulled it off in spades! We thoroughly enjoyed every minute. We really had no idea what to expect and were very impressed with the entire production. The play itself was in turn funny, thought provoking and ultimately very moving - and the acting and staging was first rate. Wow! I'm going to try to bring my eldest daughter Georgia to see it. She's starting the drama program at ESA this fall and loves drama. I think she would love it."

~ Arthur Irwin, patron

"Thanks for a lovely evening, how did you get such a perfect moon; it led us all the way to the subway. It was so great to see a play with familiar actors but also, actors I had never seen before. I hope the sun and the moon shine on your remaining performances. Even the audience was new to me for the most part, which is rare and thrilling. Congratulations!"

~ Mallory Gilbert, Tarragon Theatre's General Manager, 1971-2002

YICHUD (SECLUSION):

“For anyone curious (or simply perplexed) about orthodoxy, *YICHUD (Seclusion)* is a real treat. The play immerses the spectator in an Orthodox wedding and puts a human face on religious practices that often seem quite alien. At times endearing and frequently very funny, *YICHUD (Seclusion)* reminds us that the Judaism we share transcends denominational differences.”

~ Ira Levine, *Darchei Noam Synagogue*

“Ottawa is still buzzing after your performance - a brilliant concept, innovative production filled with emotion, fun, sensitivity and drama. You certainly have left your mark in Ottawa and you have established many fans.”

~ Norman Barwin, *Friends of the Israel Museum*

“Being of the Christian faith and never having been to a Jewish wedding was exciting for both of us - we loved the tradition and ceremony. And the music! What can we say - it was all we could do not to jump up every time they played. We were in the presence of greatness last night and our hearts are full.”

~ Carole & Jimmy Zaza, *patrons*

“The evening was outstanding. I was blown away by the attention to detail with the set design, transforming the space into a sacred space. The acting was stellar.”

~ Baruch Sienna, *Educator, The City Shul, Toronto*

“As well as stirring up lots of memories related to my orthodox upbringing, the play filled me with laughter and pleasure and sorrow and more.”

~ Rochelle Rubinstein, *painter*

“Your piece is courageous in its honesty and scope. I appreciate that you take on such intimate topics, challenging traditional, sometimes regressive and oppressive, 'doctrines' of sexuality within the context of a faith-based community. Your work is intelligent, heart-filled and deeply meaningful; it was touching to see how affirming it was to those in attendance.”

~ Alisa Palmer & Ann-Marie MacDonald (*Artistic Director, National Theatre School / director; playwright / author*)

THE GLADSTONE VARIATIONS:

“Tamara for the common man. *The Gladstone Variations* was a mysterious, unsettling and dislocating experience like following Alice down the rabbit hole, only this time we plunged down the labyrinthine corridors and backrooms of the Gladstone looking for clues to the strange world we had landed in.”

~ Andy Mckim, *Artistic Director, Theatre Passe Muraille*

“*The Gladstone Variations* were terrific theatre. As a creator who works in an experimental mode, I welcomed the mastery of interlocking, site-specific work that Julie and Aaron brought to bear on the project. Toronto desperately needs an expansion of style in its Theatrical endeavors - *The Gladstone Variations* offer exactly this. The method was a treat, the stories were wonderful. This was experimental theatre that worked magnificently. These two young producers are worth their weight in gold. Hang onto them!”

~ Ross Manson, *Artistic Director, Volcano Theatre*

“I experienced *I Grow Old* as a voyeur, an intimate friend and confessor. At times the performance was too private, like when the central character came to rest against the wall with his toes touching my folded knees. I saw him in a moment of confusion and sadness that no man should ever have to show. This is the kind of intimate, courageous, no-place-to-hide acting that borders on madness, and by watching we all went mad, to the point that the fleeting glimpse of a ghost might have been brilliant *mise en scene* or the product of a deep transformation which has taken place in ourselves.”

~ Alon Nashman, *actor & playwright*

“*The Gladstone Variations* is a great work of theatre. It's charming and haunting, and the thematic connections between the 4 pieces are beautifully understated. It's just so enjoyable to walk around The Gladstone Hotel while being told stories.”

~ Hannah Moscovitch, *playwright*