

CurtainUp

The Internet Theater Magazine of Reviews, Features, Annotated Listings

A *CurtainUp* Review *Hamlet: An Exploration*

By Deirdre Donovan

Everybody has a story—and this is mine.— Storyteller



Matt de Rogatis and Jay Michaels' *Hamlet: An Exploration* is presented by the New Jersey-based Nine Theatricals company in a brief run at the 13th Street Repertory Theatre. It retells Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a parable that has roots in the Bible, ancient Icelandic tales, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, (the lost) *Ur-Hamlet*--to mention a few.

Sound like a hodge-podge of literature stuffed into one piece? Well, yes and no. De Rogatis and Michael add a narrator, ably performed by the actor RJ Lamb, who serves as our tour guide for this experimental work. A fellow spectator during the play, Lamb rises from his seat at crucial junctures during the performance to comment on *Hamlet's* cultural foundation, its manifestations in literature, and the enigmatic work itself. Though not everything Lamb says is original, he s a natural raconteur.

De Rogatis is crackling good in the titular role. A few other cast members nail their supporting parts: Lorraine Mattox, as the young Ophelia, deftly covers the poles of her character's personality, which goes from dewy innocence early on to horrific disillusionment following her father Polonius' murder. For her famous mad scene, Mattox enters from the back of the theater and saunters down the center aisle to the performing space and then goes insane, singing snatches of bawdy songs and nonsense to the royal couple and Laertes.

Greg Pragal as Horatio is not only the Prince's confidante but scribe, diligently scribbling down his friend's perceptive words as they travel together through the shadowlands of Elsinore. Special notice to Vanessa Altshuler for her gender-bending and sassy interpretation of Guildenstern. Instead of playing the character as a vapid yes-man to Claudius, she shows some spirit and injects some welcome comic relief into this dark play.

David Arthur Bachrach as Claudius tends to fall into a sing-song pattern with his iambic pentameters. And Linda S. Nelson's Gertrude, seems too emotionally distant from her stage husband. Perhaps Nelson could try a peck on the cheek or some hand-holding with Claudius, now and then, to warm up the scenes where they appear together.

The creative team does much with little. The only prop is a throne, Yorick's skull for the grave-digging scene, and fencing swords for Hamlet and Laertes' tragic duel at play's end. Still, each is used inventively, as is every nook and cranny of space.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Adapted by Matt de Rogatis and Jay Michaels

Directed by Jay Michaels

Cast: Matt de Rogatis (Hamlet) David Arthur Bachrach (Claudius), Linda S. Nelson (Queen Gertrude), Lorraine Mattox (Ophelia), Jim Kempnor (Polonius), Brian Patrick Murphy (Laertes), Greg Pragal (Horatio), Milton Elliott (The Ghost), Ali Stover (Rosencrantz), Vanessa Altshuler (Guildenstern, RJ Lamb (Storyteller).

Graphic Designer: Michael Loupos

Photography/video: Chris Loupos

Sculptor: Shane Vannest

Costumes: Maya Luz Molina-Araujo

Lighting: Maryam Penelope Sweirki

Fight Choreography: Michael Hagins

Stage Manager: Mario Claudio

www.13th Street Repertory Theatre, 50 West 13th

Street. Tickets: \$20. Phone or visit online at

<http://www.13thstreetrep.org> or

<http://hamletnyc.brownpapertickets.com>

From 7/13/16; closing 7/24/16.

July 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and

23rd @8pm July 16th, 17th, 23rd and 24th @3pm.

Running time: 3 hours and 15 minutes with two intermissions

Reviewed by Deirdre Donovan based on matinee performance of 7/17/16

REVIEW FEEDBACK

Highlight one of the responses below and click "copy" or "CTRL+C"

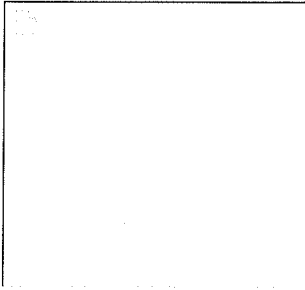
- I agree with the review of Hamlet
- I disagree with the review of Hamlet
- The review made me eager to see Hamlet

Click on the address link E-mail:

esommer@curtainup.com

Paste the highlighted text into the subject line

This experimental theater work that is free-wheeling and loose-limbed in its structure. There's a clunk, now and then in the theatrical machinery, but if you suspend your disbelief, and are truly attentive to the storyteller's words, this piece will coalesce in your imagination.



(CTRL+ V):

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