

new leaf



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In the Spotlight 2005

featuring

Inheritance | by Laura Schellhardt, directed by Erin Shelton

Close to Victory | by Idris Goodwin, directed by Bill Hyland

Lexicon | by Nick Keenan, choreography by Allison Kurtz

REVIEWS

Chicago Reader, May 27, 2005

The most interesting of the three new works on New Leaf Theatre's program is Nick Keenan's performance piece *Lexicon*: he has a sound designer's sensibilities, and his script / soundscape (delivered in voice-over) is ambitious, challenging and entertaining if at times impenetrable. Three dancers perform Allison Kurtz's choreography, underlining the text's stream-of-consciousness observations. But at 50 minutes *Lexicon* is too long - we begin to rebel against its randomness, wanting to impose order.

A static staging and dull performances mar Idris Goodwin's *Close to Victory*, a *Behind the Music*-style retrospective for a street slam poet. There's humor here, but the script doesn't say anything new. Laura Schellhardt's odd *Inheritance*, about a woman becoming part of a bathroom she's inherited, is amusing but needs fleshing out.

- Jenn Goddu

Time Out Chicago, May 26, 2005

New Leaf's festival of new works, which attempts to showcase "three playwrights, three styles, three voices," unintentionally does a disservice to each of the writers it features. These one-acts don't belong together any more than your tuxedo, your brown penny loafers and your white gym socks do. Add to that glaring clash the fact that all three unconventional pieces are highly uncomfortable in the dainty and proper theater space at the Lincoln Park Cultural Center, and you've got an evening that defeats its own purpose.

In Schellhardt's *Inheritance*, the first and shortest piece, two women are locked in the bathroom that one of them inherited from her deceased mother (her sister inherited the rest of the house). The faux-existentialist sketch feels like a playwrighting exercise meant to experiment with the style of other writers (a little Pinter, a little Becket), but definitely not a play. The second entry, *Close to Victory*, follows a tacky cable-access host's attempt to probe the career of a hip-hop street performer. Goodwin has a canny understanding of the hip-hop world and its parasitic hangers-on, and he writes about it playfully. But Hyland has directed it as a staged reading without the script, so his cast can only stand up and sit back down.

Keenan's *Lexicon* demands the most attention, albeit in a pushy way. Keenan, a top-shelf sound designer, has recorded 30 minutes or so of cosmic stream-of-consciousness philosophies (two uncredited voice-over artists give the evening's best performances) [NOTE: Nick Keenan performed all voiceovers in *Lexicon*] and pairs it with an unspecific movement piece. If his rambling thoughts about topics like color refraction and the culture wars provoked us to think more deeply about his subjects, the efforts would be less wasteful. Since New Leaf has the resources and ambition to mount new works, it should take on single full-length projects.

- Christopher Piatt

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