

KDHX RADIO

Review: *Hit-Story* by Carter W. Lewis

OnSite Theatre Company has an intriguing new production in its latest offering, the world premier of *Hit-Story*, by St. Louis playwright Carter Lewis. OnSite Theatre does not stage their productions in a particular theatre, but instead selects venues that enhance the work in question. In this instance, their venue for *Hit-Story* is Sweat, 8011 Maryland Avenue, a fitness center/boxing gym in Clayton, a perfect location, as the play requires a boxing ring. I am then intrigued and wonder if the play was written specifically for the venue, or the venue was chosen in response to the creation of the play? Just curious.

Thinking about what I saw, in many ways I'm hesitant to describe exactly what the show is about. But, I will try. In a nutshell, the thrust of the play is anger: anger physically manifested, anger as perhaps an evolutionary response to the ills of modern society, anger as clarity, a choice in which emotions and actions are unconstrained, anger to confront the morally bankrupt as atonement for their sins. If the above sounds strange, it is what I took away from seeing it. There was a lot going on. No doubt others in the audience took away something else, but that's what the art of theatre is all about.

Director Tom Martin assembled an exemplary cast who all do more than justice to their parts. Michelle Hand ably portrays Janet Harden, the frustrated wife of a college professor, Harry (a strong performance from Christopher Hickey). Harry is once again experiencing uncontrollable and intense physical episodes he calls "The Fury," during which he exhibits violent boxing jabs with his arms and upper body. Dr. Derek Fender (a unreserved Jason Cannon) is Janet's brother, a therapist to high rollers like CEOs and Senators, most of whom have morally questionable actions to hide. Janet begs the reluctant Derek to council Harry, and he agrees. Harry's mother (an astringent Donna Weinsting), whose nose is broken by Harry near the top of the show, describes Harry's episodes as an evolutionary manifestation, dismissing their implications. An intense Katie McGee is Eloise, the grad student Harry is mentoring, unapologetically spiritual and accused of plagiarism, and she sees God as Harry's salvation to his problem.

That's the cast and the characters.

Like all really good theatre, the show made me think, made me admire the skill of the playwright and the actors, and also made me think that perhaps there was more there than I was able to glean. From atop my exercise ball in the back of the room, I did enjoy the production. I can say I believe it's a show that deserves to be experienced, on-site, in Clayton.

The only quibble I have with this production is that with the action starting in one location in the building, and continuing in another location down a narrow flight of stairs into the basement, some of the action is missed as the audience shuffles slowly from one room to another. Bringing up the rear as I did, I'm not sure what I missed in transit.

Hit-Story runs 1:05 without an intermission. Two-show-a-night performances continue at Sweat through November 19, 2011. For more information visit.