

THE DESTRUCTION OF FOURTH WORLD - FULL OF AVANT-GARDE FUN

By Mike Buzzelli 03/30/2009

Coyote (Kelly Van Kirk), a mythical trickster god of Hopi legend, appears to Bernie (Mike Lion), a thirteen year old Jewish boy, shortly before his Bar Mitzvah in Murray Mednick's new play, *The Destruction of the Fourth World*.

The trickster seeks to annihilation of all things; Coyote's mission is to destroy the world and make way for the next one. According to the myth, the world has already been destroyed three other times.



Left to right: Mike Lion, Kelly Van Kirk, Michael Shamus Wiles, Laura James
"The Destruction of the Fourth World"
New Works by Murray Mednick
A Zoo District production presented by Padua Playwrights
Mar. 26 - Apr. 19, 2009 (213) 625-1766 www.paduaplaywrights.net
Photo courtesy of Zoo District

Bernie, whose mother Sarah (Yvette Wulff) committed suicide, embraces the coming of the end. Losing his mother at such a young age to such a tragic circumstance has ill equipped this intelligent lad for the world. Agoraphobic Bernie turns his room into a technologic cocoon. He retreats from the world and his upcoming transformation into manhood. All the while, the trickster god, invisible to the rest of the family, taunts the mortal boy with details about the end of the world. Bernie's family tries to coax the boy out into the fresh air, but to no avail.

Unfortunately Bernie is from a long line of Jewish existentialists, his brother David (Scott Victor Nelson), his sister-in-law Chrystal (Kim Fitzgerald), his father Caleb (Michael Shamus Wiles) and Grandma Rosie (Laura James) all struggle with their own problems. They are each gazing into their own navels and not finding much besides belly button lint.

Caleb fears he is losing his memory much like his mother Rosie, who suffers from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia. He is in and out of his own twisted reality, still reeling from the self inflicted death of his wife. Rosie's illness leads her to believe she's in Rio, and not in the nursing home down the street. David wrestles with his faith. Chrystal, a convert to the Judaism, wants her husband to believe.

Caleb has the unenviable task of telling his son that there is nothing wrong with the world and he should go outside and live in it, when he doesn't really believe it himself.

The Destruction of the Fourth World is more than a treatise on Nihilism, but a moving emotional tale of humans trying to cope with their humanity in a complex world bent on destroying itself.

The characters shoot rapid fire dialogue at each other with the ferocity of a Gatling gun, wounding each other with their words just as fiercely. The play, masterfully co-directed by Kristi Schultz and Brian Frette, is seamless.

Lion, a student at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, is truly gifted, with talent beyond his years, and Wiles is superb as the bewildered father, Caleb.

It is James' Rosie that is the real stand out. She is the quintessential Jewish mother with memory loss. Her comic timing is impeccable. Luckily, Mednick bestowed Rosie with the wittiest lines.

The Destruction of Fourth World blurs the fourth wall. It is experimental theatre at its finest, full of avant-garde fun. It's the end of the world as you know it, but you will feel fine.

- Mike Buzzelli

CLOWN SHOW FOR BRUNO - HAPPY FACE WITH A WALLOP

By Mike Buzzelli 03/30/2009 03:17:58 PM

In a squalid train station, three harlequins, Emilio (Daniel Stein), Quinn) and Jacko (Bill Celentano), recount the tragic tale of Bruno artist and author, in Murray Mednick's new one act play, *Clown Bruno*.

Schulz, a Jew confined to the ghetto in the occupied Polish city of Drohobycz, was shot and killed by a Nazi Gestapo officer in 1942.

When Drohobycz was occupied, a Gestapo officer, Felix Landau, Schulz's drawings, arranged a pass out of the ghetto, and commissioned him to paint frescoes in his house. In the clown's Landau kills Sophie a Jewish girl who is the sex slave of fellow officer, Karl Gunther. Gunther shoots Schulz in retaliation for the his lover.

The details are a somewhat fictionalized retelling of the tale, but is the same; Schulz was killed by Gunther, shot down in the street bullets in the head.

The clowns, using the Commedia Dell'Arte, start the tale with and bawdy jokes but slowly delve into a dark story of the Schulz's the jesters reveal the true savagery of man.

Mednick's play is brisk and fluid. The slow descent from comedy horrific tale works surprisingly well. Director Guy Zimmerman show along at a frenetic pace. The clowns pratfall and contort in ways, until the story gets grim and their clownish affectations fall morphing into a melancholy treatise on the brutality of man.

The cast is dynamic. The play works because all of the performers equally talented. Celentano channels Jerry Lewis's comic funny an adroit skill, Stein is delightfully lecherous Pantalone, and Kali charming, sexy and adept actor.

Clown Show for Bruno puts on a happy face and then wallops you in the gut with an emotionally gripping tale. It's an excellent new work, and not just bread and circuses.

- Mike Buzzelli



Kali Quinn, Daniel A. Stein and Bill Celentano

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Photo by Stacey Bode

Cleo (Kali Schulz, an Show for

liked account, Gestapo murder of

the result with two

slapstick life. Soon,

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