
Ewing Reviewing

2019



Jan Ewing
William J. Cataldi

**Major Works Off- & Off-Off-Broadway in New York City
as Reviewed on HI! DRAMA**

PUP'S BOOKS • NEW YORK CITY

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Introduction

The year 2019 marks my first full year as a reviewer for the **HI! DRAMA** website, and it has literally flown by. It began with the production of my own play, *Nursery Rhymes*, as part of the **NYWinterFest 2019** at the **Hudson Guild Theater** in January. The review (see p. 1) was written by my new colleague, Jake Goldbas, who has joined the **HI! DRAMA** team and become a good friend. We have also cowritten several reviews which have been included here.

This year we also feature twenty-two reviews from William J. Cataldi, my life partner and colleague. William is new to the theater. He was educated in literary analysis and brings a fascinating viewpoint to the plays he sees. There is more information about Jake and William below.

Those of you who have seen and read *Ewing Reviewing 2018* will notice that some of the information in this Introduction remains the same. This is just general information that has not changed since last year.

NEW COLLEAGUES

Jacob Goldbas is a writer and market researcher living in Brooklyn. In 2013 he won the **Washington, DC, Fall Literary Festival** essay contest. He writes about art and music as well as theater. He loves his friends and family, especially his baby nephew.

William J. Cataldi (Bill) is something of a working-class intellectual. He's been with HI! DRAMA now for about ten months. Eva Heinemann's press invitations kept coming, and Billy noticed a play he wanted to see, the brilliant *Bleach*. We didn't have the small ticket price at the time, so he said, "How about I write a review for a ticket. I'm up to it." So Eva tried him out, the review turned out very well (see p. 10), and he became one of the team. Since then, he has become intrigued by the important Queer Theater Movement, which is turning into his specialty. In his own words ...

*Eight of the twenty-two productions I reviewed in 2019 constituted queer theater. Queer theater has come into its own since the recent advent of same-sex marriage, boasting numerous companies, like **National Queer Theater**, that produce queer*

plays with all queer performers and production staffs. It's not the same thing as gay and lesbian theater, which clearly moved into the conservative mainstream long before Obergefell (e.g., The Inheritance on Broadway). Queer themes include transgenderism, non-binary concerns, and cutting-edge criticisms of contemporary society. Queers "think outside the box."

*Two of the plays I saw last year were "African American" plays, and I note that those plays had heavily African American audiences. Just so, queer theater attracts a largely queer audience. Of course, any audience member is a good audience member (far too many plays have houses of less than 50% of capacity); but I'd like to see more heterosexuals, more conservatives, and more white people attending productions outside their comfort zone. Two of the three best plays I saw in 2019 (Bleach and The Straights) were queer. The **Criminal Queerness Festival**, the main offering of **National Queer Theater at WorldPride**, was a life-changing experience for me. This new form of theater is on the outside looking in, and it has a lot to teach all of us about the culture we live in, ourselves, and humanity. And that's the point of theater in the first place: it teaches us about humanity.*

HI! DRAMA

This excellent site consistently covers more new experimental plays and musicals than anyone else in New York City. In order to see our almost daily postings, check out **Facebook.com/hidramas** or watch the television show on alternate Saturdays at 1:30pm EST on Spectrum Ch. 56, RCN Ch. 83, Fios Ch. 34, or streamed live on **www.mnn.org** (click on **MNN#2**).

A word about the "FACES" placed at the end of every review. This is a long-standing tradition that sums up the opinion. The best is **HAPPY FACE PLUS**, the worst is **UNHAPPY FACE MINUS**. The "FACES" in between are self-explanatory.

UNION ASSOCIATION

Actors' Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 50,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFLCIO, and is affiliated with the FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence.



— Actors' Equity Policy Statement

On Broadway, cast and crew members *must* belong to an appropriate union. In this book, Broadway productions are identified and union membership is assumed. For Off- and Off-Off-Broadway, Equity members can appear *only* if an AEA waiver has been obtained by the producer. An asterisk (*) indicates the name of each AEA

member appearing under this waiver having received “permission to appear in an Equity Approved Showcase.”

Similarly, this symbol (°) appears next to the names of members of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. Other professional organizations are credited when they appear in individual reviews. All information has been provided by the producer or the press agent.

EWING REVIEWING 2019

This book is the second in a series to be published yearly, providing exposure for, and historical information on, a cross-section of Independent Theater performances, drawn at random from the previous calendar year in New York City.

The *Index* (see p. 321) is a reference index, not a subject index. It provides an easy guide for connecting companies and individuals to their productions. It is designed to access a participant once in each event. In other words, if a name has three page numbers listed, that person is involved in three different plays, not listed three times in one play. Note, if their specialty is noted, assistants are listed under that specialty (i.e., “Assistant Directors” will appear under **DIRECTORS**). **ASSISTANTS & INTERNS** is for volunteers with no listed specialty. *Everyone* who appears onstage is listed under **ACTORS**.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As always, many thanks to the inestimable Eva Heinemann, an Outer Critics Circle member and founder of **HI! DRAMA**, for her support and guidance, as well as her work cowriting a number of these reviews. I’m also grateful to Bill Cataldi, not only for his literary contributions, which include his fine article *Death and Resurrection* on the **National Queer Theater’s Criminal Queerness Festival at WorldPride** (see p. 311), but also for his heroic proofreading. And thanks to Jake Goldbas and colleague Jordan Auslander for their fine contributions.

Finally, thank you to all the actors, singers, musicians, and production artists who have enriched our lives during 2019. We’ve seen political plays, dramatic and funny plays, classical plays, musicals, and operas. Nowhere in the world is there a more concentrated selection of great theatrical art. Almost everything we see is worth remembering. That is the intent of these books. — Jan Ewing, NYC (2019)