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## Three stories, one act each: that's right, it's the Winter One-Acts

### [Molly Thomas](#)

 January 16th, 2009 by Molly Thomas

Ram's Head's Winter One-Acts will be performed Thursday, Friday and Saturday night at 8 p.m. in Pigott Theater. The three one-acts being performed (from over 20 submitted) are "The Powder Room," written by Samantha Toh and directed by Kip Hustace; "Heat," written by Andrea Ayala and directed by Jean Ansolabehere; and "Bloodsong," written by Jessica Cornwell and directed by Cassie Vergel.

#### **"The Powder Room"**

The first play of three, "The Powder Room," confronts a potentially touching relationship between a rich golfer and his well-educated chauffeur, but fails to convey the full impact of its own plot. The script, written by Samantha Toh, is torn between two possibilities: a scandal-ridden farce set in a ritzy men's bathroom at the local country club, or an analysis of how social classes keep us apart. By attempting to accomplish both, the production doesn't entirely deliver on either option.

The script opens in a full blast of comedy, with the low-brow but giggle-worthy urination jokes one expects from a play called "The Powder Room." Steve (Wyatt Roy) runs witty circles around his companion, Jesse (Jamio Cornejo), as they ponder who would build such a needlessly fancy room for men, and why Steve's perfect society wife has an overwhelming desire to involve kitchen utensils in their sex life.

The jokes are funny, but the serious discussion of secrecy at the end of the play rings hollow, lacking sympathetic characters and a solid background. If "The Powder Room" were told as a pure farce without an awkward moral, or if it revealed from the beginning its intentions of social justice, the story would be far more compelling. In his director's note, Kip Hustace writes, "[The play] asks: What should you hide from others? How much can you hide from others? And ultimately, why does it have to be this way?" The play hints at, but never quite answers his questions.

#### **"Heat"**

In telling the story of a pregnant Hispanic teenager from L.A. with an unfeeling older sister, an incarcerated boyfriend, an angry father and no mother at all, it is understandably easy to stray into stereotype. "Heat," pleasingly, avoids this trap when telling a story rife with these pitfalls. Instead, it presents Gaby (the pregnant teen, played by Grace Mandler) and her sister Tania (Grace Um) sympathetically, especially in showing Tania's conflicted emotions over her sister's pregnancy.

The story is not entirely smooth — once or twice a plot twist is introduced with no warning, and the characters tend to vacillate between wild extremes of emotion, inducing sympathetic whiplash in those watching. One of the most touching moments of the play, however, is an unexpected twist, as the father of the unborn child reads aloud a letter he's written to her mother. Despite every prediction within the play,

and every stereotype of incarcerated fathers-to-be, Edgar (Avinash Achaibar) promises to come home and start their family as soon as he gets out of jail, and predicts that their child will be a girl. Though it's perhaps an overly hopeful view of how Gaby's life will be, "Heat" creates genuine goodwill towards its characters, and I found myself believing that Gaby and Edgar would transcend their stereotype and succeed.

### **"Bloodsong"**

"It's a choreo-poem," Liesl Spitz, producer of the One-Acts, told me when I asked her about Bloodsong. The piece defies definition, so a short description will have to suffice: Six women will be shot tomorrow morning for ill-defined "war crimes." Over the course of the show, they collectively and individually describe their ideas about fighting and war. Speaking and moving in unison, they present a front of women against a world of masculine fighting. Identified only by their roles, the Oracle and the Gypsy sing us the Bloodsong — a song passed down in our blood from our ancestors, but also a song about bloodshed. The piece is breathtaking: incredibly well written, choreographed, acted and sung. Though not a standard one-act by any stretch, the piece is a fascinatingly well-crafted exploration of women and war.

Each woman speaks to us individually, usually to tell us why she began fighting the status quo. The Student tells us that she ignored the terror as it began to grow in her country, claiming that she was "hiding in libraries, on sidewalks, in the velvet underbelly of the opera house." She joins the freedom fighters to assuage her guilt at her own blindness.

The Oracle, who is physically blind, tells us that she was born knowing that the people she had come to save would eventually put her to death. The Gypsy says little but sings the Bloodsong at the end of the play, and the end of her life.

Every woman has a unique story, all of which they share over their last night alive. When dawn is breaking, the Anarchist wonders if her motivation of love justifies her acts of violence. When great evil is confronted with great love, she asks us, "How can there be any other choice?" She means her question seriously, not rhetorically — when facing her death, she wants to know if there was any other course of action she could have taken. In the most disturbing moment of the evening, the play hears her desperation but fails to answer her. She dies with her comrades, taking her questions with her.

 [Ram's Head, Winter One Acts](#)

 [Intermission](#)

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