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## CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

### WAR GAMES

The grainy haze that settles over the soldiers in David Levinthal's photographs isn't the fog of war, it's the impressionistic murk that results from setting his camera lens for an extremely shallow depth of field. The artistic effect is necessary to prevent—or at least delay—



the recognition that the soldiers are all model toys. The pictures, published in 1977 in the book "Hitler Moves East," a collaboration with Levinthal's fellow Yale School of Art grad student Garry Trudeau, are having a timely revival at John McWhinnie @ Glenn Horowitz Bookseller. Levinthal has made a career of turning scale-model figures into soft-focus icons, but this series remains a crucial turning point. As Trudeau notes in the book, the images "set up an exquisite tension . . . between the innocence of the facsimile and the insidiousness of the original." Displayed alongside Nazi source material and the tiny toys themselves, the sepia-toned photographs have a peculiar power. We know they're far from real, but when it comes to war, deception and confusion still rule.

—Vince Aletti

tors—Philippa Kaye, Okwui Okpokwasili, and Anthony Torn—and you've got a readymade vaudeville of consumerism run amok. (Tocqueville's theories on plurality inspired the piece.) The cacophonous result is less edifying than the thinking behind it; the show is missing a layer of craft that might have melded the shopping spree into a self-sustaining work. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Through April 20.)

#### HOSTAGE SONG

A rock musical about a pair of American hostages in a foreign land? Clay McLeod Chapman and Kyle Jarrow have derived from this wince-inducing concept a high-decibel romantic comedy with a seriously unnerving edge. Bound and blindfolded in their orange jumpsuits, a contractor (Paul Thureen) and a journalist (Hanna Cheek) engage in elaborate role-playing games to ease the trauma of their impending doom. Chapman's delicately rendered scenes flow effortlessly into Jarrow's songs, which are outgrowths of the characters' fantasies. The show isn't solemn—it actually rocks—but it isn't in bad taste, either. Instead, it brings a punk aesthetic to a common dilemma: the desire to connect with the most horrific stories of the day. (Kraime, 85 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

#### THE LITTLE FLOWER OF EAST ORANGE

In Stephen Adly Guirgis's messy but moving new play, a failed writer and former drug addict (Michael Shannon) enters the stage in handcuffs to tell the story of a crippled woman (Ellen Burstyn) who wakes up in a charity hospital and doesn't remember her name. What follows is a drama of parenthood, childhood, lies, and sacrifice, in which the woman's children try to piece together how she got there and how best to care for her. In spite of some first-class performances by an inspired supporting cast (notably David Zayas as a no-nonsense male nurse), the show suffers from overcrowding. However, the play still manages to make its emotional point with a rare grace. Philip Seymour Hoffman directs. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

#### MARCY IN THE GALAXY

Alone at a Greek diner on New Year's Day, Marcy (Donna Lynne Champlin) reflects in song on her foundering painting career, her nonexistent love life, and her nagging family members, who appear in flashbacks and as voices in her head. Despite Marcy's bounty of insecurities, Nancy Shayne's musical (presented by Transport Group), with its clumsy score full of greeting-card sentiments, doesn't inspire much compassion for her. She's that self-pitying friend you're always having to give pep talks to—in fact, one of Marcy's musical soliloquies is called "Hang in There." By the end of this drab therapy session of a show, the best advice for Marcy would be "Snap out of it." (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101. Through April 20.)

#### SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD

An apartheid parable from 1972, written by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona (Kani and Ntshona also star), about a man who takes the identity of a dead man in order to survive. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through April 19.)

#### SOUTH PACIFIC

Under the elegant, astute direction of Bartlett Sher, this revival—the first on Broadway since the show's debut—is a majestic spectacle. The 1949 musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, adapted from James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific," conjures the Second World War and the lush corner of the globe where the Navy Seabees of the saga found themselves waiting to engage the Japanese. The plot involves a romance between Émile de Becque (Paulo Szot), a widowed French plantation owner who is the father of mixed-race children, and Ensign Nellie Forbush (Kelli O'Hara), a self-confessed "hick" from Little Rock. O'Hara puts a fine shine on the role of Nellie, but she's too classy and too knowing to fit the idiosyncratic comic contours of the role. The Brazilian Paulo Szot is superb, with a resounding creamy bass voice and a warm masculine presence. But, in the end, the score is

the incontrovertible star. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/14/08.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

#### Also Playing

**ADDING MACHINE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100. **ALMOST AN EVENING:** Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 212-239-6200. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEEBO BRINKER CHRONICLES:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **BETRAYED:** Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. **CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR:** Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through April 19. **CRIMES OF THE HEART:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. Through April 20. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE DRUNKEN CITY:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through April 20. **THE FIFTH COLUMN:** Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. **THE FOUR OF US:** City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. **MACBETH:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NOVEMBER:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **PASSING STRANGE:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **SOMETHING YOU DID:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

## NIGHT LIFE

### ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*

#### APOLLO THEATRE

253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5300)—April 15: Joe Jackson scored a clutch of memorable hits during his incarnation as one of New Wave's Angry Young Men, twenty years ago. He then left behind the world of smart-mouthed pop to explore more expansive, sophisticated ground in the realms of jazz and classical music. Since reuniting with his original band in 2003, however, the pianist and singer has returned to his roots, and his edge has not dulled; he left New York City in a snit a few years ago, irate about gentrification and the ban on smoking in bars. He recorded his latest album, "Rain," in Berlin. It isn't spiky New Wave, but it does showcase Jackson's knack for whip-smart songcraft. He's here with two members of his quartet from his "Look Sharp!" days: the bassist Graham Maby and the drummer Dave Houghton.

#### B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 14-16: The legendary blues singer Etta James. April 22: Pat Benatar, one of the leading voices of female defiance on mainstream rock radio throughout the eighties, lit up the airwaves with hits like "Hit Me with Your Best Shot" and "Love Is a Battlefield." These days, she's married (to longtime partner and guitarist Neil Giraldo, who joins her here) and is a mother, but she still packs plenty of power and attitude.

#### BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 19: The reggae-oriented jam band John Brown's Body. April 20 and April 22: The skittish sounds of Tokyo Police Club, a popular indie-rock outfit from Ontario.

#### DROM

85 Avenue A (212-777-1157)—April 17: The NY Gypsy All Stars, a local collective of Balkan mu-

DAVID LEVINTHAL

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