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Troupe offers monologues in promising debut

By [Alice T. Carter](#)

TRIBUNE-REVIEW THEATER CRITIC

Saturday, April 19, 2003

Barebones Productions is offering area theatergoers not one but two Pittsburgh premieres: a new theater company performing three monologues by an up-and-coming playwright not previously seen here.

Those who attend area theater may already know Barebones' founders. Barbara Hersey and Patrick Jordan, recent graduates of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Theatre Arts, also have performed with area theater companies such as Starlight and City Theatre. As producers, Hersey and Jordan plan to offer Pittsburgh premieres and timely revivals of what they call "contemporary American classics," plays from the 1950s to the present.

For their debut production, in which they both perform, they have chosen a trio of monologues by Neil La Bute. La Bute is best known as the screenwriter for "In the Company of Men," "Nurse Betty" and "Possession." But he also has been identified by theater critic John Lahr of The New Yorker as "the most important playwright to emerge in a decade."

The characters in "bash:latterday plays" offer three grim personal revelations of their involvement in acts of violence. The evening opens with Jordan performing "Iphegenia in Orem," a chilling solo monologue about a dark secret and the death of an infant daughter. Hersey concludes the evening with another solo monologue, "Medea Redux," that begins with her recounting a physical relationship that began with her junior high school teacher when she was 13. Between these pieces, Autumn Ayers and Jason Planitzer offer separate but interlocking and alternating monologues in "A Gaggle of Saints," in which a pair of privileged college students recount their separate memories of a weekend in Manhattan tinged by violence.

Presented in a long, narrow back room that serves as gallery space at a vintage resale shop in Squirrel Hill, the production is simply but neatly and stylishly presented.

Details

Barebone
"bash:latterday plays" continues 26 in the C
Backward
5840 Forv
Squirrel Hill

Performar
p.m. Thur:
Saturdays
suggested
to \$10. De
915-2162.

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The pieces themselves are difficult to discuss without revealing too much of the stories. But their title references to the Greek tragic figures Medea and Iphigenia prepare us for disturbing deeds of passion, rage and recklessness. La Bute's characters also make casual and parenthetical references to their Mormon roots that are also hinted at by the "latterday" in the play title.

 [Larger](#)

Director and production designer Jeff Cordell's spare use of furniture and harsh lighting e Bute's characters' clinical, detached and dispassionate delivery that makes their recounti chilling. Cordell allows his actors and their characters little movement, adding additional e the disparity between their outer control and their inner turmoil.

Hersey and Jordan both could both do more to help us make a connection between their the brutal events. As the overprivileged Ivy Leaguers, Ayers and Planitzer are perhaps th disturbing as their bright, glib, self-satisfied chatter about cars and tuxes and haircuts env tale in a blanket of orderly normality.

While the plays themselves are dark and disturbing, they are nonetheless a bright and pr inaugural offering.

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