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## THEATER ARCHIVES

2/10/2005

### The Glory of Living

Writer: [TED HOOVER](#)

First of all, let me say that I'm not one of these people who believes theater should have a point or, rather, any point outside of just being entertaining. The "purpose" of something like *Anything Goes* is just to see how many brilliant songs you can shovel into one night of theater.

Conversely, certain shows have, in place of entertainment, a life-altering point; *Waiting for Godot*, for example, is nobody's idea of a fun night, but surely there's few evenings of theater as rewarding as this Beckett masterwork.

Occasionally, if rarely, a show has both a point and entertainment value: most of the Sondheim musicals, lots of Tennessee Williams, much of Wendy Wasserstein and Lee Blessing (the more astute among you will recognize that Shakespeare and Chekhov are completely omitted from these lists).

So what, then, to make of the latest from barebones productions -- Rebecca Gilman's *The Glory of Living*? It's an evening of strong writing which occasionally touches on the teeth-rattling, and Lord knows it's doubtful Gilman's play is going to receive as stirring a production anywhere else ... but lacking both entertainment and purpose I'm not sure what, if indeed anything, barebones expects us to do with it.

It's a two-act comprised of brief blackout scenes, most of which are set in trailers and motels. Lisa -- the 15-year-old-daughter of a prostitute who trolls the CB waves for her tricks -- ends up the child bride of Clint, an ex-con who gets his sexual kicks raping young girls. Clint uses Lisa to befriend and procure these girls and then, in a unique twist, has Lisa

**A lot of the evening is watching three women fight over the same man, which isn't all that compelling**

murder them. She ends up on death row; there are a few scenes with her idealistic court-appointed lawyer, and then the show's over.

Unless, I suppose, you're a serial rapist and murderer (and stranger than that, read this column), I think we can all agree that the entertainment potential here hovers around zero.

And given the specificity of the milieu, the characters and their story, I don't think Gilman's trying to make any sort of point with *Glory*. Since the people *in* the play would never be the same people who *see* a play, Gilman must be trying to tell us something about *them*. But what? Rapists are bad people? Trailer parks are nasty places? Or is it just the mundane fetishizing of brutality?

I don't honestly have an answer to these questions. I just know that barebones, Gilman, director Melanie Dreyer and a group of fiercely talented actors -- Patrick Jordan, Amanda Frost, Terry Parshall, Claire Fraley and Jarrod DiGiorgi, among others -- have worked themselves into a lather to put forth something that, for all intents and purposes, means nothing.

**The Glory of Living continues through Feb. 20. 31 Terminal Way, South Side. 412-363-5847.**



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