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THEATER ARCHIVES

1/22/2004

This Is Our Youth

Writer: [TED HOOVER](#)

Following their compelling debut production last year of Neil LaBute's *Bash*, Barebones Productions steps up to the plate with another bad-boy script, *This is Our Youth*, written by Kenneth Lonergan, currently the "hot" playwright on the theater scene. You might know Lonergan as the writer and director of *You Can Count on Me*, the film that got Laura Linney an Oscar nom a couple years ago. Then there's his play *Lobby Hero*, which Barebones is presenting in staged-reading form on Wednesdays and Sundays during the run of this show.

This Is Our Youth, meanwhile, was a London sensation with its ever-changing all-star cast, including Matt Damon and Carey Affleck, and its portrait of privileged young people living the low life in early-'80s Manhattan. And now here it is in Pittsburgh with an even better cast: Patrick Jordan, Jason Planitzer and Dalla Andracchio -- so take *that*, Mr. Matthew Damon!

Melanie Dreyer directs this production in what must (or should) be a textbook example of perfect and precise direction. There is not a wasted moment on stage, not a dropped beat nor a blurry choice made all night. If everyone in this city would direct like Dreyer does here, I might actually enjoy my job.

Jordan, Planitzer and Andracchio -- though maybe a bit too old for the roles -- form a tight, cohesive ensemble and, with Dreyer's direction, it's hard to believe that what you're seeing on stage isn't actually happening right there, for the first time, in front of you. For a play attempting *verité* as much as this one, that's the highest compliment.

And, oh yeah, that play. With so much else going on in the evening that I loved, you'd figure I have to find something to gripe about. *This is Our Youth* is like many, *many* other plays before it. I spotted, shall we say, "homages" to Mamet, Bogosian, Shepard, Korder, and I've no doubt there's many more.

Not being that familiar with Lonergan *oeuvre*, I can't say where this falls in the timeline. It does seem to me to be an early work which, while showing promise, still feels trapped in the style of someone other than the playwright.

But other than that, Barebones has another hit on its hands.

This Is Our Youth continues at Modern Formations Gallery in Garfield through Jan. 31. 412-363-5847.

Melanie directs *Our Youth* what makes it a textbook example of perfect and precise direction.



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