

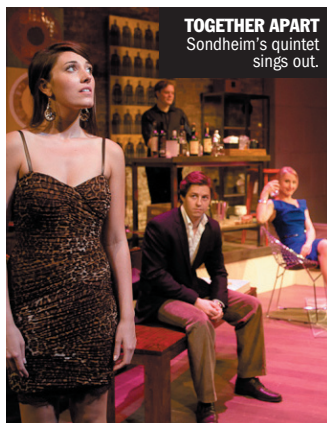
## Putting It Together



**Porchlight Music Theatre** (see Resident companies). By Stephen Sondheim. Dir. Brenda Didier. With McKinley Carter, Adam Peltz, Alex Weisman, Michael Reckling, Aja Goes. 1hr 45mins; one intermission.

This Sondheim revue is set at a generically urbane cocktail party in a generically posh apartment, thrown by a generically discontented middle-aged couple. They're joined by a just plain generic younger couple; a few sparks fly, but they're outflown by recriminations. Musical revues such as this one, conceived by the composer and Julia McKenzie, the director of its original production in 1993, are perhaps unavoidably reductive. But Sondheim and his collaborator seem determined to diminish his output to only his most sorry/grateful expressions of romantic indecision—certainly a running theme in his work, but not perhaps as defining as *Putting It Together* would imply.

If the show is conceptually questionable, Porchlight's production is at least stylishly put together. Adam Peltz and McKinley Carter are splendid as the older couple, particularly in the Act I climax featuring a pair of songs from *Follies*,



**TOGETHER APART**  
Sondheim's quintet sings out.

the bitter duet "Country House" and the even more acrimonious "Could I Leave You?" Peltz plays both heart-hardened husband and half-hearted playboy with weary credibility, while Carter is simply heartbreaking. Aja Goes and Michael Reckling are perhaps a bit *too* young for the younger couple; Reckling seems as if he can't possibly have earned the loneliness of *Company*'s "Marry Me a Little." Alex Weisman amuses as the puckish, fey observer who gooses the action. Musical director Austin Cook makes Sondheim's music sound terrific in jazzy new arrangements.

—Kris Vire

## Waiting for Lefty



**American Blues Theater** (see Resident companies). By Clifford Odets. Dir. Kimberly Senior. With ensemble cast. 1hr; no intermission.

It's fitting that *Waiting for Lefty*'s opening night coincided with President Obama's proposal of a bold new jobs plan before Congress. Clifford Odets's Depression-era drama about a cab-driver union contemplating a strike is a harsh critique of big-business practices in the U.S.; while the clothes and language may be dated, the issues certainly are not. Discrimination in the workplace, shady dealings within the military-industrial complex and distrust among union members are still problems in the labor force. The strength of this revival lies in capturing its characters' honest emotional responses as they fight for their futures.

Director Kimberly Senior fills the union meeting with nonspeaking characters, heightening the gathering's grave intensity by packing the stage with somber faces desperate for work. Senior develops a striking contrast between the chaos of the



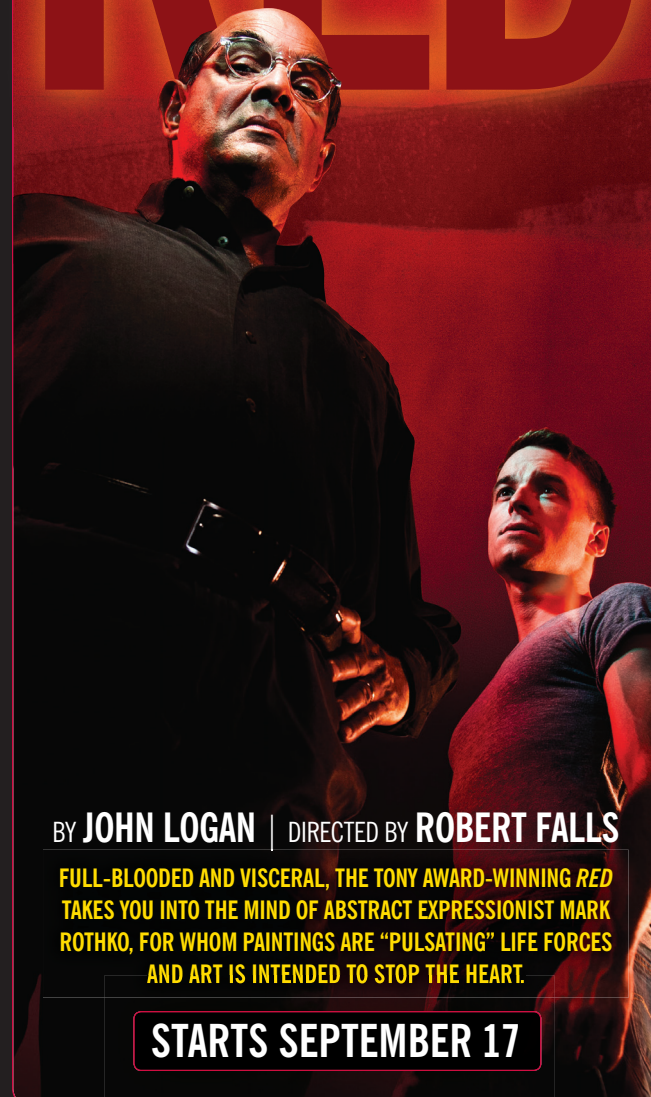
**LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL** Terry Hamilton addresses the crowd.

meeting and the solemnity of the interspersed vignettes offering insight into the characters' personal lives. In two roles conceived for men, Cheryl Graeff and Mechelle Moe turn in the show's most poignant performances; their casting gives the script an extra layer of gender commentary. While the 1935 play's push for embracing communism may not remain too relevant, the fundamental idea of unity during economic crisis continues to resonate. —Oliver Sava

# "ELECTRIFYING"

—VARIETY

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