

## Long Day's Journey into Night



**Eclipse Theatre Company**  
(see Fringe & storefront).

By Eugene O'Neill. Dir. Nathaniel Swift. With Susan Monts-Bologna, Patrick Blashill, Stephen Dale, Joe McCauley. 3hrs 30mins; two intermissions.

By facing up to his own unhappy childhood, Eugene O'Neill created a modern-day Greek tragedy and achieved the high-water mark for American drama. The four Tyrone—the family at the center of this 1941 masterpiece—may not suffer as much as the gang from *Oedipus Rex*, but they're just as much at the mercy of fate. The unchangeable past has set them on the road to destruction, and their undoing unfolds with a horrible inevitability.

There's really only a single reason to see Nathaniel Swift's staging of the play, but it's a good one: Susan Monts-Bologna's outstanding performance as Mary, the Tyrone matriarch in the grips of a morphine addiction and a heart-piercing loneliness. Speaking rapidly and at times as if to herself, with her hands fluttering around her face and hair like nervous hummingbirds, Monts-Bologna's Mary seems both hunted and haunted,



**MARY ME A LITTLE** Dale pleads with Monts-Bologna.

retreating further into her selective memory until she finally becomes her own ghost. Even her voice grows softer over the course of the play, until it too reaches the vanishing point.

The actors who play Mary's husband and two sons are competent but come across as supporting players instead of members of an ensemble. Patrick Blashill brings a boorish charm to patriarch James, a famous actor obsessed with money. But he lacks the charisma of the onetime matinee idol. As sons Edmund and Jamie, respectively, Stephen Dale is too sardonic and Joe McCauley rattles off his lines like an auctioneer.—*Zac Thompson*

## i put the fear of méxico in 'em



**Teatro Vista** (see Resident companies). By Matthew Paul Olmos. Dir. Ricardo Gutierrez. With ensemble cast. 1hr 35mins; no intermission.

The tensions along the U.S.-Mexico border are clearly worthy of reporting right now, whether journalistically or theatrically. But Matthew Paul Olmos's grating new Tijuana-set work doesn't fit the bill, at least in a Teatro Vista premiere in which director Ricardo Gutierrez's realism-based vision butts heads with Olmos's more fantastic tendencies.

The Los Angeles-born, New York-based playwright opens his piece on an agitated but perplexing set of circumstances: An otherwise decent-seeming Mexican couple (Miguel Nunez and Charin Alvarez) is holding a pair of white-bread American tourists (Cheryl Graeff and Bryn Packard) at gunpoint in a Tijuana back alley. We eventually get an inkling—though Olmos doesn't make it easy—that the two couples' early-teenage kids might be classmates and budding crushes in Southern California, a development that pleases neither set of parents due to irrational assumptions about race, class and nationality. Olmos keeps



**TIJUANA FLAT** Graeff, left, and Alvarez don't make nice.

packing on grotesque layers—a walking-dead cop, a parasitic snake as an embodiment of racism—and Gutierrez fails to reconcile them into a unified whole.

Despite the presence of thoughtful, solid actors such as Alvarez and Graeff, Olmos's characters come across more as arguments than human beings. His storytelling is riddled with implausibilities and confusions, including a number of additional roles filled by Cruz Gonzalez-Cadel and Marvin Quijada that feel more like digressions than enhancements. Gonzalez-Cadel gets to deliver one moving monologue as a victim of the vicious drug cartels operating along Mexico's border. Too bad it seems imported from another, entirely unconnected play.—*Kris Vire*

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