

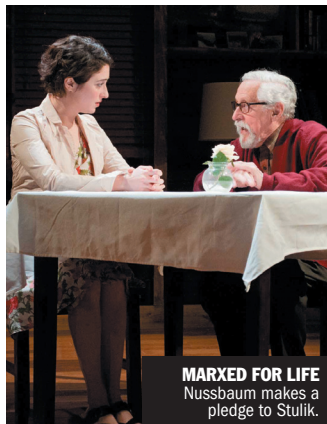
After the Revolution



Next Theatre Company (see Resident companies). By Amy Herzog. Dir. Kimberly Senior. With ensemble cast. 2hrs; one intermission.

Staking out a space at the precise intersection of the personal and political, Amy Herzog's 2010 play depicts a Northeastern Jewish family, the Josephs, that largely defines itself by its leftist politics. The show opens at a gathering to celebrate the law-school graduation of the family's youngest activist, Emma (Christine Stulik). Her father, Ben (Mick Weber), a high-school teacher of "history and social justice," proudly regales the room with a tale of announcing his Marxism at a PTA conference. Emma has launched a social-justice fund of her own, named for the family's late, revered patriarch, Ben's father, Joe, a government operative blacklisted for refusing to name names for Joe McCarthy. When the revelation comes that Joe may have in fact passed secrets to the Soviets during WWII, it's unclear what's worse for Emma: the potential threat to the work she's doing under his name or the news that her father knew all along and kept it from her.

Herzog handsomely raises the stakes on the family-grievances drama, cannily commenting on the way politics shift between generations and the impossibility of perceiving the past as our forebears did their present. Warm and funny throughout, Kimberly Senior's production features a terrific cast, including splendid turns by Mary Ann Thebus as Joe's fiery, hard-of-hearing widow and Mike Nussbaum as a kindly donor to Emma's fund. Stulik is a sympathetic protagonist, though she's saddled with a too-long sequence where Emma's pouting slows the play nearly to a stop.—*Kris Vire*



MARKED FOR LIFE
Nussbaum makes a pledge to Stulik.



LOVERS LOST Eddie Bennett, left, seeks to reconnect with Lindley.

SHOW OF THE WEEK

Angels in America, Parts One & Two



Court Theatre (see Resident companies). By Tony Kushner. Dir. Charles Newell. With ensemble cast. Part One: 3hrs; two intermissions. Part Two: 3hrs 50mins; two intermissions.

Probably the most praised theatrical work of the last couple of decades, Tony Kushner's two-part epic looked both forward and backward when it made its Broadway debut in 1993. The play itself was set in the mid-1980s, as the AIDS crisis began to break through to mainstream consciousness while Republican operatives worked to make the Reagan majority permanent. The production, on the other hand, represented to some a new vision for Broadway, a vast, provocative reimagining of political drama as well as a frank depiction of the gay experience; one critic described it as "nudging Broadway into the 21st century." Simply going to see *Angels*, one could argue, was a political act.

Seeing *Angels* again 19 years later is a somewhat different experience, but not necessarily a less thrilling one. The play remains an impressive, ambitious synthesis of the ideas of the '80s, but the relative normalization of the gay-rights movement and the changes in the spread of AIDS allow some of Kushner's other big themes about the personal nature of history, me-first politics and our callous attitude toward the environment, for instance, to feel more widely relatable. The struggles of AIDS-stricken Prior Walter (Rob Lindley)

and a fictive version of vile right-wing operative Roy Cohn (Larry Yando) acquire a broader resonance amid the election-year debate over Obamacare. "The worst thing about being sick in America," Cohn says, "is you are booted out of the parade."

That Court artistic director Charles Newell's production employs a number of actors known for musical theater—Lindley, Yando, Hollis Resnik, Geoff Packard as closeted Mormon lawyer Joe Pitt and Heidi Ketteen as his pill-popping, emotionally stunted wife, Harper—feels appropriate. Kushner's play shares the musical genre's sense of grandiosity. When these characters can't express themselves in simple words, they break not into song but into cresting monologues or carefully orchestrated split scenes.

While all of the revival's eight actors acquit themselves admirably—with the forceful Yando and stunning, defiant Lindley standing out—Newell's production doesn't always hit the right notes. In Kushner's more fantastical scenes, Newell doesn't go far enough; *Part Two's* visit to the angelic Council of the Continental Principalities is played with a plodding solemnity that misses the playwright's humor.

Still, Court's production mostly does justice to Kushner's intelligent vision. The central image of John Culbert's set is a slab that often serves as a bed, whether conjugal or hospital, but also brings to mind a mausoleum—a range of disparate duties that seems right. This revival marks Kushner's accomplishment as a monument, but by no means a museum piece.—*Kris Vire*

Enfrascada (A Hoodoo Comedy of Jarring Proportions)



16th Street Theater (see Resident companies). By Tanya Saracho. Dir. Keira Fromm. With ensemble cast. 1hr 50mins; no intermission.

Enfrascada, Spanish for "jarred," "bottled" or "trapped," promises what seems improbable: a comedy about one woman's desperate journey into the rich mysteries of Santería (a.k.a. Hoodoo) in an effort to restore a failed relationship. Tanya Saracho's comedy—a reworking of a script first seen in 2008 as *Jarred*—boasts a rapid succession of punch lines and a brisk progress, but ultimately relies too heavily on superficial treatments of its subjects—human and supernatural—to do them justice.

Alicia (Dana Cruz) is shocked when her live-in boyfriend of nine years breaks up with her to be with another woman. After her friends Yessenia (Yadira Correa) and Carolina (Yunuen Pardo) encourage her to try Hoodoo over psychotherapy to help her heal, Alicia becomes increasingly invested in the secrets of Santería.

Correa and Pardo do a solid job of providing contrasting support to their friend in overly familiar roles (think Charlotte and Samantha, respectively). The sparkling Lorena Diaz, as each of the three *Señoras* (Hoodoo practitioners), breathes originality into the script, easily electrifying the otherwise formulaic story with characters who manage the difficult task of being both broadly comic and specific enough to be engaging.

Less satisfying are the murky motivations behind much of Alicia's drive to rekindle her failed romance. As she wades deeper into the underworld of Santería, our lack of meaningful knowledge about her drains the human stakes from the proceedings and accentuates the play's formulaic march to conclusion rather than resolution. She may lose herself in her obsession, but we don't know who she's lost.—*Benno Nelson*



THE EX FACTOR The cast goes for stakeout.

PHOTOS: TOP, MICHAEL BROSLIN; LEFT, ELISA SHORTIDGE; RIGHT, ANTHONY ALORDI