The Adventure of Stenography, And Other Fulfilling Careers

"The Typographer's Dream"

Here

I'm not sure what Adam Bock is trying to say in "The Typographer's Dream," his quirky one-act play, but his three-member cast makes it entertaining. It may be something about attitude creating reality or maybe America's love-hate relationship with career fulfillment.

It's not the most promising concept: a stenographer, a typographer and a geographer sitting at tables discussing their work.

The stenographer, Dave (Dan Snook), doesn't care for his occupation's formal name. "You call yourself a court reporter," he says. "It's a little more glamorous." He shows photographs of the computer-aided transcription machine he uses in the courtroom and explains it in a surprisingly interesting way. He looks back at high school typing class and remembers the beginning of his career. "You buy your first steno machine, and the adventure—oh, boy—the adventure begins."

But if you want job enthusiasm, there's the geographer, Annalise (Kate Hampton). "Migrations, weather, tectonic plates, ice floes, all of it," she says breathily. Her excitement prompts her to stretch out on her table like Michelle Pfeiffer making love to the piano in "The Fabulous Baker Boys."

The typographer, Margaret (Meg MacCary), can barely get a syllable in edgewise at first, and when she does, it's usually, "Uh." Later she rhapsodizes over accent marks, foreign punctuation, dollar signs, copyright marks and brackets, and "suddenly as you keep looking, a whole landscape reveals itself."

At other times, though, the three see the downsides of their work clearly. There's a dinner party scene in which Annalise accuses Dave of never using the word "I" when he talks. He demands to know what she thinks that means, and the audience wishes she'd tell him. Maybe this is a message about how obnoxious it is to psychoanalyze friends after dinner.

Mr. Bock's dialogue has the ring of true interchange. There are several lines like Annalise's: "O.K. Sure. But still, fine. Sure, O.K., Dave," in which the director, Drew Barr, and the actors give each word a distinctive emotional meaning.

Others are succinct, like the one all three characters agree on: "Sometimes the pressure gets to you."

ANITA GATES
Strange Things Grow in an Office Culture

THE DESK SET

THE TYPOGRAPHER’S DREAM
By Adam Bock
Here
145 Sixth Avenue  212-647-0202

Has your job come to define your sense of self? Such is the problem for the trio of characters in Adam Bock’s quirky comedy, The Typographer’s Dream. Margaret, the typographer, sits at her desk, sandwiched between the desks of Annalise the geographer and Dave the court reporter. No, this is not an office of rhyming employment, but a theatrical occasion for the three friends to regale us with the minutiae of their fields. If their earnestness often seems over-the-top, it’s perhaps out of a desire to feel that their professional choices haven’t been in vain. Personally, they don’t have much to compensate them. Annalise, a Canadian and a drinker, is hypercritical of her American surroundings; Dave unconsciously resists using the pronoun “I” and lies incessantly; Margaret daydreams about crashing her car in such a way as to disable the air bag. Perhaps these middle-class (yet richly neurotic) workaholics should consider an outside hobby?

Bock’s idea seems indebted partly to Beckett’s monologue plays, partly to Melissa James Gibson’s [sic], and partly to more banal situation comedies. If the work doesn’t ultimately fuss together, it maintains an oddball cleverness that is immeasurably helped by the talent of director Drew Barr’s cast. Dressed like a wacky librarian, Meg MacCary reveals the frustrated creativity rolling inside Margaret’s daily fusing with the alphabet. From her anti-American wisecracks to her habit of putting everyone in their place, Kate Hampton humorously exposes the sneaky aggression of Annalise’s geographical preoccupation. Dan Snook locates the pathos at the heart of Dave’s yolkyless egg of a personality. While Margaret longs most poignantly for a career change, her fellow drones share the typographer’s dream of discovering themselves anew in the space between letters on the workaday page. —Charles McNulty
Type Casting
Art and commerce collide in talky new play from queer Canadian playwright

BY RANJIT JOSE

Clever writing and dramatic acumen come together in Adam Bock's new play, The Typographer's Dream, about the subtle connections that link very different individuals together. A typographer (Meg MacCary), a geographer (Kate Hampton) and a stenographer (Dan Snook) discuss their lives, their identities, and where they find themselves in the world over a multiple-bottle-of-wine dinner. Director Drew Barr does well with Bock's script, bringing each character and their eccentricities alive, thanks to a talented cast from the Clubbed Thumb Theatre.

During most of the play, it appears the three characters are in separate situations, in different rooms, talking about the things that seemingly matter to them the most—their occupations and their passion for them. Apparently this is Bock's subtle way of telling the world that although we might be in close proximity to each other, we are, as a community, set apart from each other.

Each character is torn between passion for their career and the need to earn a living. The characters speak extended monologues, between each; we hear a beep, like during a game show. At this point the next character begins their turn. These "speeches" mimic real life (at least in the U.S.) where individuals are often so wrapped up in their own personal lives that they don't even bother to finish many of their sentences. Each character is so consumed with his or her own life that there is little time for anyone or anything else. U.S.-Canadian differences, gay stereotypes, and sheer confusion ultimately drive the point home.

MacCary, as the typographer, and Snook, as the stenographer, both do an excellent job filling out their character's roles. Yet it is Kate Hampton who is most convincing in her role of Annalise, the geographer. Her forceful voice and excellent diction made for a convincing piece on the importance of geography and the creation of boundaries in which we confine ourselves.

In many ways, The Typographer's Dream makes one think beyond their own boundaries and delve beyond the vapid realities we deal with on a daily basis. Bock wants viewers to explore the subtle connections between individuals and the physical boundaries that confine us to the reality of the world. Bock wants his characters (and his audience?) to expand their horizons, defy stereotypes, and find creative ways to mix art with business.
peaceful aura. And when all else seemed a puzzlement, Peng's remarkable performance kept it going—and going well.

The Typographer's Dream

Reviewed by Michael Lazen

Presented by Clubbed Thumb at HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., NYC, Feb. 9-23.

The usually witty and engaging company Clubbed Thumb, which describes itself as a producer of "funny, strange, and provocative" new American plays, presents an imaginative work by playwright Adam Bock that examines the lives of three typically mundane Americans.

The dominant motif in these people adrift is work life. Annalise, the confident geographer, is completely lost in the world of maps, in addition to showing other people what is wrong with their lives. Margaret, the typographer, is barely able to communicate: shy and withdrawn, she holds the adamant view that the typographer's life is under-appreciated. Dave, the stenographer, takes such an extraordinary interest in his tedious job he seems not to have a self, especially in the way he relates with his boyfriend.

Bock brings these characters to us largely by direct address, as the three sit in chairs and alternate in speechifying about their craft until a sudden tone stops them. After a long while, perhaps too long a while, there is

Continued from page 57

The Typographer's Dream

some dialogue among the three, especially between Annalise and Dave, which then hits a peak of emotion. Most of the speeches contain a job involvement so pathetic and unenlightened that a highly comedic and absurd tinge is evident.

Drew Barr's actors know exactly how to exploit this sort of material. As Annalise, Kate Hampton is hilariously spot on as a mumbling, bloodless workaholic with but a shadow of a life. As Margaret, aware of everyone's problems but her own, Meg MacCary displays perfect timing and an appropriately edgy sensibility. As the intense Dave, Dan Snook is so totally natural he will evoke comparisons to sad people you might know, driving without headlights, about to somehow crash into themselves.

David Morris's exceptionally stylish set of clean lines and sharp images lets the audience know what to expect from the start and provides an excellent frame for this original play.
Tell a story, change the world.

or a controversy

The Propagandists' Dream as a drama

Would you classify the

War and Peace, or another of your

Where did the time go

The Propagandists' Dream in just

I read somewhere that you note

The Tepatlis Theater

What does influence teach in the

Do you consider yourself a

Why are there so many people

Information cell (121) (714) 202/539

By David Singer

Tell a story, change the world.
Dan Snook, Meg MacCary and Kate Hampton in *The Typographer's Dream.*

The beginning of any review for Adam Bock's *The Typographer's Dream* has the potential for sounding like the beginning of a bad joke. "So, this typographer, this geographer and this stenographer all..." With that out of the way, I can report that Bock's new play, which opened last night at HERE in Lower Manhattan, is an intellectually stimulating and emotional look at what ties these three together and how each, in his or her own way, shapes the world in which we live.

Bock ties his trio of diverse characters together through a kind of interview process. Each one sits at a small desk staring straight ahead. As they talk in short bursts, one begins to sense that the characters, on some levels, are control freaks, but maybe rightly so. In their own way, they are shaping other people's perceptions of the world. The geographer's duty is to not only indicate what land belongs to whom, but also to record and broadcast the consequences of our actions with regard to the earth. The typographer shapes one's view of the products one buys as well as the news one reads. The stenographer records the "truth" with accuracy so that there is no doubt as to what was said in formal proceedings.

In all of this, however, Bock sees the potential for lying and the lies have given each of his characters an interesting mix of paranoia and megalomania. The typographer ruefully states: "An unethical typographer can make lies look like the truth." The geographer, at the height of her paranoia, explains why geography has been relegated to Social Studies curricula: she believes it has become "unpolitical" because the geographers will point out how people might destroy the earth.

All of this might make *The Typographer's Dream* sound as if it is a dry evening of thought, but it's not. Bock has written a bracing evening of theater, expertly and rhythmically directed by Drew Barr. Bock's words lyrically flow out of the character's mouths, creating a kind of tone poem of ideas, but allowing the
audience to learn something about the characters. One only needs to hear the stenographer knowingly emphasize the word "stroking" as the technical term for what he does, to glimpse his pent-up libido and ego.

The poetry of the evening flows out as the typographer announces "I place type." Followed by the geographer "As a geographer I guess I should be exploring the idea of place. Different types of places." The stenographer builds the cadence "Stenographers type. A lot. In lots of different places." *The Typographer's Dream* is most definitely not the beginning of a bad joke about people from three different professions.

As the action plays out on David Morris' simple set, a platform with three desks with different colored tops (a visual reference to the geographer's fascination with the color of countries in maps), Meg MacCary, Kate Hampton and Dan Snook all discover the humanity that lies underneath these individuals' professions. The bitterness that crosses MacCary's face when she discusses the consultant who has come in to oversee her company's typography business; the strange wanderlust that Hampton exudes as she describes her career before geography and Snook's growing resentment of being an outsider who only watches the world make these people not just emblems in an intellectual exercise, but people to whom the audience can relate.

It seems unfair to give away the full meaning of Bock's title. There is, however, one other thing that binds these people beyond manipulation, frustration, and paranoia. It's a joy that is simply and emotionally put in the play's final moments. There is an elegance to the answer that one believes would make the stenographer, the typographer and the geographer proud.

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*The Typographer's Dream* continues at HERE (145 Sixth Avenue) through February 23. Tickets are $15 and can be reserved by calling 212-647-0202. Information is available online at [www.here.org](http://www.here.org).

-- Andy Propst
A CurtainUp Review  
The Typographer's Dream  

by Les Gutman

A world with different typography would be an entirely different world.

---Margaret the Typographer

Before you read the rest of this review, pause for a moment and contemplate your job.

Is it important? Do you define it? Or have you let it define you?

You may see all of this as an empty exercise, but if you allow yourself to think about it for, say, an hour or so, you may come to think differently. This, in a nutshell, is the principal achievement of The Typographer's Dream, a surprising and fascinating play that also manages to be exceptionally funny.

The play commences with three seemingly unconnected characters sitting at three tables: Margaret, a typographer (Meg MacCary), Annalise, a geographer (Kate Hampton) and Dave, a stenographer (Dan Snook). Each has what could be described as
a poetic sense of what they do for a living, but all are fraught with degrees of unconvincing enthusiasm. Annalise sees geography as a science, and yet is confronted with the fact it is tainted with politics and, worse yet, business. Dave waxes philosophic about the significance of court reporting, yet every fiber of his body reveals a sensitivity to its essentially vicarious nature. And then there is Margaret, who is often at a loss for words to explain the value of her chosen field. But when she finally figures out what to say, she is especially poignant.

Playwright Adam Bock limns these characters in an abundance of short scenes — some only a line or two in length. At first, the characters step on each other’s dialogue without interacting, but as the play progresses, we learn of the connection between them. Along the way, Bock offers up meditations on a host of subjects: in particular, the notion of self and more generally, the chasm between that which is and that which is portrayed. All point to a remarkable self-examination which is contagious. Under Drew Barr’s punchy direction, the three quirky performances blossom. Although the show bogs down slightly about two-thirds of the way through, for the most part, both playwright and director succeed and maintaining our attention.

All three performers are outstanding. Meg MacCary’s Margaret is the most touching, Kate Hampton’s Annalise the most animated and Dan Snook’s Dave, the most entertaining. All leapfrog through the script with aplomb.

Now what is my job again?

THE TYPOGRAPHER’S DREAM
by Adam Bock
Directed by Drew Barr

with Meg MacCary, Kate Hampton and Dan Snook
Set Design: David Morris
Lighting Design: Juliet Chia
Costume Design: Kim Gill
Sound Design: Kai Harada
A production of Clubbed Thumb
Running time: 1 hours 15 minutes with no intermission
HERE, 145 Avenue of the Americas (@Dominick)
Telephone: (212) 647-0202
FRI - SUN @7:30 (extra performance 2/17); $15
Opening February 9, 2003, closing February 23, 2003
Reviewed by Les Gutman based on 2/2/03 performance
Feb 10, 2003

The Typographer's Dream
Reviewed By: Philip Hopkins

Three characters are seated on a light-blue set, before three separate tables. The abstract rendering of the bookcases behind them, filled with uniformly light-blue books, indicates the tenor of what we are about to see. In a series of stylized, short monologues broken by one another, and increasingly by scenes in which the characters interact, Adam Bock takes us in his new play The Typographer's Dream into rich thematic territory. His formal innovations, which amuse us and draw us into the lives of three people — a stenographer, a geographer, and a typographer — are complemented by costumes which match the bland, constrained, intense personalities and interactions the characters share with us and each other.

As Margaret the Typographer, Meg MacCary has the fewest lines of the show, but makes a great impact. With the demeanor of an inhibited dreamer, a closet passionata wrapped in an upright eccentric, MacCary conveys to us the total magic of her chosen field, its "rigor" and "clarity." In commercial typography, she realizes her power — she can represent a product to "look exciting, look serious, look fun, look valuable, seem healthy. So I did. Because that was my goddamn job."

The latter is a quintessentially American phrase conveying the rolling emotional tension not entirely beneath her surface, or that of the play. We learn quickly that Margaret, like Annalise the Geographer and David the Stenographer, is both defined by her job and defines herself against it. Thus we learn about them primarily through their jobs for the first half of the show, through projected slides of steno machines from which David explains his profession — not court reporter, stenographer — and slides of maps through which Annalise shares her obsession with them.

A Canadian played by Kate Hampton with a deliberately American accent which throws her rare maple-leaf-land "eh" into comical relief, Annalise is the most bold of the three in many respects; she is order-obsessed like the others, but more self-confident. We hear of the nearly comprehensive field of geography in grandiose terms, and of the powerful lines which divide countries, between wondrous hues that can color whole nations, like the former Soviet Union, pink on a given cartograph. Soon, however, Annalise confronts David (Dan Snook), whose job


3/2/2003
is to be a neutral witness without opinion or personality, a human recorder of the crises and cataclysms of others, about his unconscious self-effacement.

As David recoils, defending his relationship with Bob, who is apparently a drunk, Annalise stalks him like a predator, making observations that are both cold and highly personal about David's subconsciously self-diminishing speech patterns. As the tension between them ratchets up, we begin to learn more about the friendships which engage them all. Director Drew Barr does a terrific job handling both the isolation of these characters and their struggle to connect, and the aesthetic of the show is highly unified and professional.

The producing company of this show, running at HERE in SoHo, is the Obie-winning Clubbed Thumb troupe, which certainly achieves its mission to present "funny, strange, and provocative new plays" by a talented young playwright. The dramatist, a Bay-Area award winner whose style in this piece recalls the arch, funny world presented last year in the popular [sic] by Melissa James Gibson, is definitely someone to be encouraged. The difficulty of locating and mastering new forms of stage presentation, and doing so in the service of a story which makes us laugh, makes us curious and engaged, is admirably assumed by this ambitious young group in the service of this quirky new piece. As they continue their collaboration (hopefully) with Bock, we hope to see work with perhaps more emotional resonance than was in evidence here, but with the promising thematic richness and formal agility that make this show quite stimulating.
SpringWorks Festival

For the first time in its 7-year history, Clubbed Thumb - - the Off-Broadway theatre company devoted to producing the works of emerging playwrights and recipient of a 2001 Obie-Award grant - - is holding its annual festival of new plays and readings early in the year, and thus launching SpringWorks, through May 3 at the Ohio Theatre (66 Wooster St.). The featured production for SpringWorks will be Ann Marie Healy's Somewhere Someplace Else directed by Annie Dorsen, opened April 13.

This year's main stage production, Somewhere Someplace Else, charts the self-discovery of a married mid-western woman who comes to visit her sister in New York City, in the Smallest Apartment in the World. And stays. Ronnie, Jeanine, and the people who pass through their lives search the big city for pockets of hope, a glimpse of purpose, and a little privacy.

Furthermore, SpringWorks will also present the readings of never-before-seen works by new playwrights, including:

- Fishboy by Rachel Hoeffel, directed by Tim Farrell; The Catch by Alison Tatlock, directed by Pam MacKinnon; Parts by Dana Vinger; and Kid Simple by Jordan Harrison, directed by Jonathan Silverstein.

Somewhere Someplace Else will play at The Ohio Theatre (66 Wooster St., between Broome and Spring Streets), Friday through Sunday at 8 p.m., through May 3 (additional performances are offered on Monday, April 28; Wednesday, April 30; and Thursday, May 1). Tickets are $15 ($10 for students) and are available at (212) 206-1515 or by visiting www.smart-tix.com. For information about all SpringWorks events visit www.clubbedthumb.org, or call 212-602-8007.
Language as guide through Springworks

THEATER

SPRINGWORKS FESTIVAL
Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster Street; April 11-May 3; For more information call (212) 802-8007.

BY DAVIDA SINGER

In its seven-year history, Obie winning Clubbed Thumb has proved it's more than just another young theater company with a catchy name. With productions like "Jimmy Carter Was A Democrat" and "The Typographer's Dream," they've consistently offered quality work as well as an annual festival of new plays by new authors—all of which run less than 90 minutes.

According to co-artistic director Maria Striar, this year's festival is the first to be held in the spring, and the first time all three featured plays are written by women.

"We're very interested in representing women's work," Striar says, "and these pieces are bound together by what we call 'homeland insecurity.' The characters are all struggling with anxiety in domestic situations of love, work, money and space in urban settings. All three plays are actually pretty funny. We're attracted to work that lives somewhere in between categories. The writers are in their late 20's, up-and-comers, each with one particular way of using language."

The Springworks Festival includes Kate Ryan's "Design Your Kitchen," Sarah Ruth's "Late (A Cowboy Song)" and the centerpiece, "Somewhere Someplace Else," by Minneapolis actor turned playwright Ann Marie Healy, whose previous plays have been produced by EST and Clubbed Thumb.

"Mostly I'm interested in the juxtaposition between the artifice of reality... the shell over how people interact and the musicality of language and pain of being inarticulate," Healy, the writer of the centerpiece plays, says. "There's a real inadequacy of language to express true emotions."

"Somewhere Someplace Else" is a story of two sisters, one in her early twenties, who lives in New York City, and one in her early thirties, who comes to visit from Minneapolis, has a wild summer, and takes on "the artifice of New York life."

"The play explores the tin-like quality of language here," explains the author. "I love the idea of someone's personality being affected by language locality. This is the language and speech of this past year, the slang people are using right now. And there's definitely a comedic, satirical turn to it all. The fun adventures of these sisters will feel familiar to anyone who has come to New York from somewhere else."

Visually, director Annie Dorsen has placed contemporary photography on stage, creating a world that feels like a hermetically sealed artificial reality, "like being trapped in a florescent light box."

"It's a tiny studio apartment, real and stylized at the same time," Healy notes. "There's incredible sterility, and the two sisters don't have private space so they create it with silence or speaking at each other. It's talking to create architecture. I was really interested in the mundane aspects of their experience in New York, but using ordinary things you have to create tension in another way. It's difficult joining the mundane ideas and showing them theatrically. How do you sustain tension?"

What Healy does is use scenes that orient the audience to where they are. Although there's no conventional plot in them, they help the audience "to navigate" through the piece from beginning to end.

"I hope they'll come out of the theater [having experienced] something funny, sad and strange and maybe unclear, having seen people respond to each other in mysterious ways that still feel true. I think the title really says it all. It's the idea of looking some place else to fill in the emptiness of a life. This happens to be New York, but it could easily be anywhere."
review
"somewhere someplace else"
clubbed thumb at
the ohio theater
soho, nyc
18 april 03
reviewed by
brook stowe

Could it have been mere coincidence that sent the Spring's first ice-cream truck down t2k's street the same day Clubbed Thumb's 8th Annual Springworks (née Summerworks) Festival opened downtown?

And although I soon wanted to drop a heavy object upon said truck as it sat idling below, bleating the same moronic little jingle on a giddily endless loop, its presence nonetheless signified the coming of the season of renewal after a very long and very cold winter.

Springworks' flagship production this season, Ann Marie Healy's "Somewhere Someplace Else" is also about renewal and new beginnings and staking out your place in the sun. With specific and sparing vagueness, Healy has crafted both a comedy in her characters' awkward, stumbling pursuit of meaning and a tragedy in how they can never quite grasp it long enough to claim it as their own. Healy's particular gift here is in capturing how people talk around the basic questions of life and being, of love and God and purpose; often without looking at one another, rarely if ever connecting.

Ronny (Mara Stephens), a married, thirtysomething woman from Minneapolis, arrives abruptly -- and alone -- at her sister Jeanine's (Laura Heisler) ridiculously small Manhattan flat for a weekend stay. Ronny and Jeanine, several years her sister's junior, have never been close as siblings, and it is not difficult to see why. Where Ronny is a stoic, God-fearing housewife determined to put her best face on and her best foot forward, Jeanine favors Monster Magnet t-shirts, has a downtown guitar-playing boyfriend, and sullenly clings to a low-level office job with a "cunt-faced cow" for a boss.

Gradually, it becomes apparent to Jeanine that Ronny's appearance at her door was not a carefree weekend getaway but rather the beginning of a desperate, groping odyssey to change her life. Prone to frequent, sudden bursts of sobs, Ronny believes her life is in God's hands, and if it is God's will that her life be sad, then it is her job to be
happy about it. The sad part she has down pat. It is being happy
about her sadness that is prompting those crying jags.

As the weekend turns into weeks and the weeks into months, Ronny
slips into a tentative, awkward affair with B.G. (an excellent Andrew
Weems), Jeanine's upstairs neighbor and a self-described "bastard
from Brownsboro" Texas. With his loose tropical-print shirts, baggy
cutoffs and perpetual 16-oz. Budskis, B.G. seems to be waiting for the
next Jimmy Buffet tour to roll into town, impressing the vulnerable
Ronny as the very antithesis of her reserved, polyester-clad husband
Lance.

Before long, Ronny and B.G. are sharing stanzas of rooftop poetry;
B.G. confessing he thinks of her more often than he does his favorite
BBQ sandwich back home in Brownsboro. A burgeoning Lothario, he
spontaneously serenades her with a stumbling warble of "She's Always
A Woman To Me". Ronny is smitten, and soon the two are exchanging
more than clumsy poetry and furtive kisses.

Healy has real affection for and a solidly grounded understanding of
her characters, and never patronizes what could be easy marks for
smirking ridicule. At times, her fragmented, anecdotal structure --
several scenes are vignettes and others scarcely more than blackouts
-- risks severing the emotional connections she is attempting to build,
and here she is helped enormously by the steady, unifying hand of
director Annie Dorsen and a strong, simpatico cast.

It is particularly refreshing to find -- in a play essentially about women
and a woman's attempt at independence and self-discovery -- that the
men present are neither idiots nor assholes, but rather -- surprise! --
real human beings. Besides the superb Weems (think Bill Murray at his
lowest key), Todd Cerveris turns in fine work as Ronny's bewildered
husband Lance, a decent Midwestern guy who tries to understand why
his wife doesn't seem to be coming home while looking appropriately
baffled at her sudden inexplicable bursts of off-key Billy Joel. Heisler's
Jeanine strikes an edgy balance between simmering, self-deluded
anger and the sad, desperate resignation of finding her purpose in life
by knowing that, yes, she's living in the same city and walking the
same streets as those models from Vogue and Elle.

As Ronny, Mara Stephens manages to encourage empathy where
others may have evoked only pity, though her relentless Julie
Hagerty-esque drone became increasingly grating as the night went
on. David Korins' clever rotating set (spun with precision by the ever-
attentive Jeff Zorabedian and Philip Delliapina) gives the distinct sense
of watching skewered creatures revolving on some eternal rotisserie,
slowly basting in their own ineffable despair.

Healy's characters are lost, alienated souls filled with a void of vague
longing, not simply for what they cannot have, but for what they are
not able to even articulate. They know only that something essential
that makes this life worth living is missing.

And that is a sadness damn difficult to be happy about, be it here, there, or somewhere someplace else.

"Somewhere Someplace Else",
presented by Clubbed Thumb at the Ohio Theater,
66 Wooster St., SoHo, NYC. 8pm Fri.-Sun., April 11-20;
$10-$15. 212.802.8007.

"Springworks 2003"
also features two second stage productions:
Kate Ryan's "Design Your Kitchen",
directed by Robert Davenport, April 14-17 at 8pm,
and Sarah Ruhl's "Late (A Cowboy Song)",
directed by Debbie Saivetz, April 21-24 at 8pm.

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Show Guide

East
Off-Off Broadway April 25, 2003

Somewhere Someplace Else
Reviewed By Melissa Kalt

Clubbed Thumb's Springworks 2003 includes "Somewhere Someplace Else," about two sisters searching for the blueprint for living life to its fullest. And who isn't? This is funny, poignant and remarkably polished off-off Broadway fare.

In short, Ronny has appeared from Minnesota to stay with her younger sister, Jeannine, in her tiny New York studio. Ronny seems to have made good choices, responsibly committing herself to marriage with the kind Lance. Jeannine has courageously forged an independent existence in the Big Apple where she currently freelances, writes songs and can pass models on the street. Though one seems drab and uncreative and the other a product of too many MTV reality shows, it is clear these sisters come from a common and sensitive root. Whether tearfully turning away from each other or retreating to the sanctuary of the bathroom, the politics of sisterhood bar direct communication as each grapples with the same questions.

Mara Stephens masterfully handles the pent-up, internally bursting Ronny with an agility reminiscent of Julianne Moore. Laura Heisler's Jeannine is equally intriguing. Ryan Shogren, Andrew Weems and Todd Cerveris are strong as the men who cross their lives. David Korins, Ben Stanton, Junghyun Georgia Lee and Fitz Patton beautifully developed the show's environment. Director Annie Dorsen has professionally and lightheartedly represented Annie Dorsen's very nice play.

"Somewhere Someplace Else"

Theater: Ohio Theatre
Location: 98 Wooster Street, NYC
Phone: 212-802-8007
Starts: April 11, 2003
Ends: May 03, 2003

TODAY'S NEWS

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- Revivals Likely to Dominate Tony Awards
- Elton John to Bring 'Vampire' to Broadway
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nytheatre briefs

**SOMEBODY SOMEPLACE ELSE**
reviewed by Chance Muehleck

In a city brimming with scrappy, innovative new theatre companies, Clubbed Thumb has carved a deep niche with decidedly left-of-center plays that are always lovingly produced. Now in its seventh year, the Thumb has gained momentum with its annual festival of new work, which has this time gifted us with Ann Marie Healy’s quirky, heartfelt *Somebody Someplace Else*. Healy owes a lot to the absurdist Pinter most perceptibly, and with this piece she strikes a difficult balance between the familiar confines of an urban subsistence and the quiet longing that is both its wellbeing and its byproduct. The tone is so specific that, in lesser hands, the whole enterprise could seem banal or trivial. But director Annie Dorsen and her cast seem to approach the play with a tuning rod of unfailing pitch, which discovers both the positive and negative areas of its drama.

Ronny has come for an ostensibly short visit to her sister Jeannine, who lives in the smallest apartment in New York. As designed by David Korins, the set is built on a moving platform that floats precariously in the dark vastness of the Ohio Theatre, the actors, then, wait offstage in full or partial view of the audience. The effect is marvelous in its simplicity, and as the sisters sob to themselves (which they do often), we sense the walls closing in on them. Jeannine is the rebel of the two, the black sheep who’s traded her Minnesota home for a few *faux* friends.

**AS YOU LIKE IT**
reviewed by Aaron Leichter

Young directors often approach Shakespeare bent on making the work uniquely their own. This method usually ends up with the neophyte in a wrestling match with the script. Erica Schmidt starts off her production of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* with the laudable idea that less is more. She casts only six actors and leaves her thrust stage completely bare except for a few coffee cans for footlights. But then she jacks up the speed so that what begins buoyantly ends up frenetic.

*As You Like It* is a lackadaisical comedy: nothing much is at stake but love, and love is foolishly fond. The play’s full of coincidences and implausibilities that Shakespeare keeps in check with whimsy. The heroine, Rosalind, might be Shakespeare’s best: she’s more friendly than Beatrice and more stable than Viola. Disguised as a boy, she woos her lover Orlando by pretending to be herself.

At certain moments, Schmidt’s team captures the play’s effortless romanticism. In one such moment, Orlando (Lorenzo Pisoni) leaps up a pillar like Douglas Fairbanks and hangs there by one foot, seemingly supported by love itself. But often the young cast seems unsure how to match their actions with the verse, and they resort to running in circles or mugging. They have more energy than they know what to do with.

This is where a more experienced director than Schmidt could channel...
and an ill-conceived bohemian lifestyle. Ronny is equally lost, but she's tied to a conservative, emotionally absent husband who pops in on business trips. Lost, that is, until she meets neighbor B.G., a man she can really sing about.

There are no fireworks, here. No grand confrontations between spouses and lovers. Only short exchanges stretched taut with forced politeness and romantic odes sung into a tiny bathroom mirror. As her relationship with B.G. grows, Ronny walks a razor's edge of guilt and barely reconciled lust. He is many things, if not everything, her husband Lance is not: he's new to her, and dangerous in a mostly playful way. The scenes progress like a voyeur's snapshots, the set rotating between each to further expose Ronny's frailty and her gathering sense of self.

_Somewhere Someplace Else_ is a play about unlikely love, and the idea that a kind of happiness may reside in its abdication. Healy's characters are scaled down to purely human size, as Mara Stephens' Ronny makes palpably clear. With her deadpan delivery and long, birdlike posture, Stephens is perfectly suited to the role. Laura Heisler plays against her with just the right amount of disgruntled rivalry as Jeannine; Andrew Weems makes B.G. a pleasingly down-home hunk, and Todd Cerveris is a furtive and tightly wrapped Lance. There's no wasted space in this latest offering from Clubbed Thumb, and, like its predecessors, it deserves your close attention. (reviewed on April 13, 2003)

**A PERFECT RELATIONSHIP**

_A Perfect Relationship_ is a charming play about two roommates, Ward and Greg, who are tricked by the same one-night stand out of their sublet Greenwich Village apartment. Though its principal characters are gay men, it feels like one of those airy screwball comedies from the 1930s, especially because we know almost as soon as the play has begun what its two leading

their energy into Shakespeare's play. But instead Schmidt finds bits of business for her actors: Lethia Nall flounces through her role as Rosalind's sidekick Celia (with a hilariously lustful moment of love at first sight) but she also spends a lot of time unpacking a tiny tea set from a picnic basket. Bryce Dallas Howard is especially in need of a strong hand as Rosalind: although she's naturally comfortable onstage, she doesn't quite interact with her fellow actors. When she's alone she bubbles over with love for Orlando and hints at a calmer and more introspective production.

Schmidt originally produced _As You Like It_ for the New York International Fringe Festival in an abandoned lot on the Lower East Side. It still feels like a do-it-yourself show, but its raw attitude doesn't transfer well to the Public Theater's cavernous Martinson Hall. Schmidt herself designed the costumes, a wonderfully garish closetful of stripes and polka dots. The clothes are great to look at, but they often wear the characters rather than the other way around. Schmidt and company have packed their show with the exuberance of youth but they lack concentration, leaving _As You Like It_ slim and dissatisfying. (reviewed on April 11, 2003)

**THE FLASHING STREAM**

reviewed by RIK

There are several reasons a company might want to produce a revival of a rarely produced work. Perhaps it speaks eloquently to important contemporary issues; or it's a really good play making for an entertaining, worthwhile evening at the theatre; or maybe it allows us to look at and better understand another time and place. This third reason would seem to be the motivation for bringing back _The Flashing Stream_. Written in 1938 by British novelist Charles Morgan, it is more an insight to a far simpler pre-war era than a parallel to our own times.

The play is actually more concerned with the relationship between the two