

Stock Home: What's the Matter with Kids Today?

by Duncan Pflaster



Stock Home, by Alex Goldberg, now playing as part of the 11th Annual International Fringe Festival, is a provocative and multifaceted piece of work that doesn't shy away from gallows humor or troublesome conclusions.

The story is deceptively simple- a woman wants a child, so her boyfriend goes out and kidnaps her a teenager from the mall. Goldberg treats this outrageous premise with subtlety and painful truth, while never surrendering empathy for his weirdly askew characters. I was very impressed by his play *I'm in Love With Your Wife*, when I reviewed it last month in the MITF, and this new play, though far from the giddy farce of the other, does not disappoint in quality. You can officially put me down as a fan of Goldberg's work.

The title is a pun on Stockholm, as in the Stockholm Syndrome, the psychological response sometimes seen in an abducted hostage, in which the hostage shows signs of loyalty to the hostage-taker, regardless of the danger (or at least risk) in which the hostage has been placed. You'd think the title would give something away, but the play develops in such unexpected ways, it really doesn't. It's constantly fresh and surprising as the players reveal strange and dimly-lit depths of their characters. The humorous tone at the start (and it is very funny indeed) gives way to its

inevitable powerful conclusion.

The three performers are uniformly excellent.

Lauren Cook is hilarious and spooky as Tammy, the woman who wants a child so badly. She plumbs the depths of her character's shallowness effortlessly- constantly prattling about *American Idol* and her hundreds of cable channels. Her upbeat excitement at everything is an eerie joy to behold; she's as gleeful as a puppy dog, while never condescending to her character's lack of brains. Her performance is note-perfect. Mather Zickel is a powerful presence as Conrad, the apish hunk who does what it takes to keep Tammy happy. He is frightening and horrifyingly sexy- he plays the "big lug" to the hilt; you can almost see the wheels turning in his head as he thinks, and his formidable body seems hewn from solid rock.

Megan Tusing is wonderful as Kaylee- she is completely believable as a precocious, smart, Bible-loving 14-year-old. She is transparent, unlearned in subtlety as any sheltered teen, letting her subtext shine through no matter the words she's speaking to appease her captors.

The direction by Seth Soloway is very good, keeping things bustling along at a good clip through most of the show. When the tone changes from sitcom funny to more dramatic material, he brings his actors through with nary a misstep. Scene changes were lit by the eerie glow of Tammy's giant television, and scored to the sound of channels being changed, a clever idea for this show (especially slipping in a clip from a documentary about the Stanford prison experiment) - the sound design was by Matt O'Hare.

I have to wonder at the script as a metaphor- in a sense we in America are suffering from a Stockholm syndrome in our art- our culture has become dumbed-down so much and yet we continue to participate in it. There's no room for things that are too smart or too interesting- we have hundreds of channels and nothing to watch, *Grease* is coming back to Broadway because of a frickin' reality TV show, and political decisions are being made by idiots. Clearly someone is voting; we are all, willingly or not, sitting in front of the TV and participating in the things that are sucking the life from our art, and maybe that's because we think we like it.

Fortunately, *Stock Home* is a wonderful piece of art, and should be seen.

Tickets: \$15. For tickets visit www.FringeNYC.org or call:

In New York : (212) 279-4488 or Outside New York : 1-888-FringeNYC

Remaining performances:

Monday, August 20 - 9:45pm

Saturday, August 25 - 2:15pm

VENUE #5:

The New School for Drama

151 Bank Street

(West & Washington Streets)

A, C, E, L to 14th Street / 8th Avenue

Tickets are \$15 and will go on sale on July 21st. Duncan Pflaster is an award-winning playwright (2 time winner, Spotlight On Award, "Best New Play" 2005 and 2006), whose plays have been produced in Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, and New York. He also has been known to direct, write music, play the ukulele, and (if his arm is twisted) act.