

**The Vomit Talk of Ghosts**

By Kevin Oakes. Dir. Jay Scheib. With Katy Downing. Flea Theater (see *Off-Off Broadway*).

In *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts*, a teenage girl may or may not be having sex with a dead man who may or may not have been her lover before he may or may not have killed himself, while a dog may or may not be transcribing their conversations for her parents, who may or may not be insane. Kevin Oakes's dark fantasia of postpubescent female anxiety makes little effort to explain its shifting syllogisms of dream logic; after 20 minutes of Oakes's oblique verbiage, punctuated with violent sexual imagery, the audience may or may not conclude that *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts* is an inscrutable mess.

Since half of the audience left at intermission on the night I saw the play, my guess is that the mayas have it.

In fairness, Oakes's script reads somewhat better than it plays, in part because the reader is able to stop and think in ways that are impossible in the theater. There is cleverness in the

way he expands the teenage angst of the troubled Amber (the up-for-anything Downing) into nightmarish globs of moist confusion; Sayra Player is funny and convincing as Amber's tense mother, and there is some visual wit in Jay Scheib's staging, much of which takes place in a semiobserved bedroom and is shown via *Blair*



**WE SEE DEAD PEOPLE** Meghan Carroll, left, and Katy Downing play teenagers with a secret.

*Witch*-ish handheld-camera video. But by the second act, when a talking bear becomes a policeman and helps Amber escape from some halfway house of the damned, the audience can be excused for wishing that these nauseous ghosts would just shut up. —Adam Felaman

**Waitin' 2 End Hell**

By William A. Parker. Dir. Woodie King Jr. With ensemble cast. 47th Street Theatre (see *Off Broadway*).

William A. Parker's marital drama *Waitin' 2 End Hell*—in which a hapless, devoted husband watches his unfaithful wife destroy their marriage—is basically a male revenge fantasy not far removed from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Only here, the shrew isn't tamed so much as abandoned and left to her own miserable devices.

Parker's narrative goes from a comical battle-of-the-sexes discussion among three couples to a punitive ending in which the adulterous Diane (the fierce Trish McCall) pushes her husband, Dante (Marcus Naylor), over the edge. Along the way, Parker includes generous belly laughs, erotic interludes and domestic intrigue, which gives variation to

his crude dramaturgy. *Waitin' 2 End Hell* is superior to a UPN sitcom, but its wisdom never rises above Biblical verse quoted by Dante's



**DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE** Naylor, right, doubts the fidelity of wife McCall.

**DON'T MISS...****Assassins**

(Studio 54; see *Broadway*) The revival of Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's blistering musical about presidential killers is murderously good fun.

**Caroline, or Change**

(Eugene O'Neill Theatre; see *Broadway*) Musical theater expands its horizons in Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori's exploration of civil rights and wrongs.

**Charlie Victor Romeo**

(P.S. 122; see *Off-Off Broadway*) The 1999 hit, reenacting black-box recordings of airplane disasters, returns to excite and astonish.

**Rehabulation or, the Re-Education of Undine**

(Playwrights Horizons; see *Off Broadway*) A hubristic African-American woman's past catches up with her in Lynn Nottage's heartbreaking social comedy.



**The Mystery Plays**

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(McGinn/Cazale Theatre; see *Off Broadway*) Two neat thrillers by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa make for a night of metaphysical shivers.

**Pullman Car Hiawatha + The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden**

(Connely Theatre; see *Off-Off Broadway*) The Keen Company presents two majestic miniatures by American master Thornton Wilder (*Our Town*).

macho buddy, Larry (O.L. Duke): "It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with an angry woman." Seconding Larry's patriarchal worldview is

Alvin (Ron Scott), another friend who bitterly calls child support "the black man's crucifix."

On the distaff side of this debate, there are peppery contributions from Diane's friend, Shay (Thyais Walsh), who has a crush on Dante, and the blithely submissive Angela (Elica Funatsu). Walsh, a seductive and mischievous actor with great comic flair, gets considerable mileage out of her thinly sketched role, which is equal parts harridan and nymphomaniac. Written in a snappy, slangy idiom ("Why I got to beg for my coochie?" Dante plaintively asks Diane at one point), the material is ably handled by the seven-person ensemble and smoothly staged by Woodie King Jr. While no one will mistake this play for art or even a deep look at love and marriage, it is an entertaining slice of life presented with bawdy good humor. —David Cote

PHOTO: (TOP LEFT) LEAH GELBY; (TOP RIGHT) JOAN MARCUS; (BOTTOM) CARMEN L. DEJESUS

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