

TOBY ZINMAN



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It's checkout time for this corpse

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By Toby Zinman
For The Inquirer

Exit, Corpse is a dark, nasty little comedy full of body parts and unusual suspects. Nicholas Wardigo, who gave us the far more substantial and intriguing *The Do's and Don'ts of Time Travel* last fall, is a local playwright to watch. Carol Laratonda's direction makes smart use of the difficult space, although the whole business would be more successful as two brisk scenes rather than two acts separated by an intermission.

We're in a hotel room (we'd never know it was a four-star hotel, a problem such a setting poses for a little company working on a shoestring, and the action would be far more effective and shocking if it were in a lavishly appointed room). We hear offstage angry voices. A shot! Enter Penny (Amber Wiley Capps) in a dither. Enter Madison (Felicia Leicht) spattered with blood. Their problem will be how to get the corpse in the bathroom to the exit without bringing down the wrath of their boss, Dan, "more powerful and far more creative" than God.

The play is a Martin McDonagh knockoff, with a large helping of Tarantino: gruesome humor, criminal argot (want to find out what a "Russian Doll" is?), and the kind of bizarre explanations that seem - against all odds and only for the moment - sensible.

The two women are completely winning in their own ways. Capps plays the adorable prom-queen type to perfection: Is Penny actually as moronic as she seems? "I'd rather not go back to prison - I'd be very uncomfortable with that," she says primly, filing her nails. Leicht, with her more sophisticated looks, plays the seasoned tough chick, smart and ruthless and impatient with her coworker's cluelessness. Exasperated, and with wacky delicacy, she tells Penny, "We . . . process . . . him." They are helped and hindered by the bellhop (Nick Gillette) who makes two appearances, both of them underwritten and overacted.

After the first act convinces us how unlikable these characters are, the second act changes our minds: After a long night's work, they like each other and we like them, we're even rooting for them, we're completely co-opted. We've been processed.

Plays & Players, a slightly decrepit little jewel box of a theatre, has been around for 97 years, and its new, young, energetic owners are not only offering the mainstage as "an affordable rental house" (1812 Productions has booked it for three future shows) but have also created a blackbox, the Skinner Studio, on the third floor as a producing venue to showcase local talent. Quig's Pub, adjacent to the theater, is cozy and open late as a theatre hangout.

Exit, Corpse Through Feb. 1 by Plays & Players, at its Skinner Studio, third floor, 1714 Delancey Place.
Tickets: \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. Information: www.playsandplayers.org or 800-595-4849.



NICOLAS BAROUDI

Amber Wiley Capps (left) and Felicia Leicht, principal players in the little comedy "Exit, Corpse."

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Phillyist Reviews... *Exit, Corpse*

Another new writer joins our ranks today. Tabitha Vidaurri moved to Philadelphia nine years ago to study at the University of the Arts and decided not to leave after graduation. We can't say we blame her. Tabitha loves theatre, sketch comedy, soft pretzels, old books, and a good IPA. We think she'll fit in nicely. Welcome, Tabitha!



The [Plays and Players](#) theater company kicks off its ninety-seventh season with the world premier of Nicholas Wardigo's dark comedy *Exit, Corpse*. This is one those kinds of plays where you walk out feeling better about your life because you can say, "Hey, at least I never had to do anything like that."

Directed by Carol Laratonda, *Exit, Corpse* is the story of two young women who have to figure out how to get a dead body out of a four-star Philadelphia hotel room. While this may not seem very pleasant, the cast is tremendous and aptly finds the humor in an otherwise bleak situation. Madison (Felicia Leicht), a fast-talking "scotch on the rocks" sort of gal, and Penny (Amber Wiley) the bubbly, "more of a margarita" ingénue, are not exactly the best of friends, but they have to cooperate if they plan on getting out of the place in one piece. Things get even more complicated when the overly anxious bellboy (Nick Gillette) enters the equation.

The plot moves rather quickly and contains twists, turns, power-shifts and propositions. Personally I was a bit surprised when the lights came up for intermission so soon - there's quite a bit of action packed into the first act. The dialogue takes on a pulpy tone at times, which the actors succeed at pulling off. The intimate set allows the audience to feel as if they are right in the hotel room with the two main characters, uncomfortably close to their gruesome predicament. Luckily there is a minbar.

The performance takes place on the top floor of the playhouse, in Skinner Studio, which has recently been renovated into a blackbox theater. Plays and Players is the oldest continuously operated theater in Center City, and it's cool to see them produce something both sinister and sexy. You'll be happy to know cocktails are available during intermission, in case you get a hankering for a scotch on the rocks.

Amber Wiley and Felicia Leicht in Nicholas Wardigo's Exit, Corpse, continuing through February 1 at the Plays and Players Theater. Photo by Nicolas Baroudi, courtesy Plays and Players.

By [Tabitha Vidaurri](#) in [Arts & Events, Theater](#) on January 16, 2009 2:00 PM

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