

FringeNYC 2013: *theMUMBLINGS*



She always hoped to end up with the man of her dreams. So did he. They married each other. Two actors portraying fifteen characters explore narratives about relationships, sexuality, and passion in this off-kilter love story for the modern world.

[Official production website](#)
[Show details/ticketing at FringeNYC](#)
 Venue: Teatro LATEA, 107 Suffolk Street

Review by Stephen Cedars · August 13, 2013

Dan Kitrosser's *theMUMBLINGS* is on its surface a simple play that tells a simple story: a gay man working as a children's entertainer (Allen) and a sexually-repressed anthropologist (Jodie) have lived for several years in a marriage of convenience, and they explain to us how and why. Focused around only the two actors, the play requires only a simple quasi-unit set that allows their narrative storytelling to almost exclusively drive the story.

And yet Kitrosser has crafted a remarkably complex work, largely aided by director Charles Foster Cohen's taut pacing and the tour-de-force performances of Keith Foster and Lynne Rosenberg. The first impressive aspect is what the structure demands of the actors. As they attempt to explain their wonderfully perverse relationship, each actor embodies a whole roster of other characters who helped shape their lives. This requires several ridiculous turns – Foster as a super ditz faux-intellectual college chick, or Rosenberg as a coked-up gigolo, as examples – but it's a testament to the performances that both actors easily balance such broadness with much more nuanced characterization throughout. Transitions between these personas are so fluid that we're often left scrambling to keep up.

That speed allows all involved to accomplish even more impressive feats. The script moves a mile-a-minute, not only in its transitions from scene to scene, but also from line to line. Kitrosser's balance of comedy and pathos is such that the jokes often zip through a scene without halting its momentum, suggesting that the couple's relationship is neither pitiable nor comic, but simply something that two people with difficult pasts have found suitable to their needs.

And that's what most impressive of all. Even though the story and theatricality are extremely focused, each character exhibits a dynamic and evocative landscape of contradictions, complications, and mysteries easier to articulate than to answer. It's a truism that one never knows what any couple's relationship is like in private – but what this play reminds us is that we really don't know anything about anyone. When the play starts, it's easy to think we understand the dynamic at play, but with each revelation of the characters' past, we're both more informed and yet less certain of what defines these people.

If anything is missing, it's perhaps a better understanding of the present moment in which Allen and Jodie live. So much about their pasts is examined, but there are only glimpses of how they manage their day-to-day, which is important in understanding the central conflict that provokes them into sharing their stories in the first place. But then again, maybe that's the point – even if we did learn more, all we'd have are more questions. That the team behind *theMUMBLINGS* can present such ideas in the guise of a rollicking and nuanced comedy is a feat worth recognizing, and most certainly worth checking out.

Preview: Interviews with Artists from *theMUMBLINGS*

We're asking artists from each show to answer questions about themselves and their work to help our readers get a detailed advance picture of the festival:

Theater is Political · Daniel Kitrosser (Writer)

1. *Is this play political? Why or why not?*
 The Personal is ALWAYS political. *theMUMBLINGS* play is about a marriage between a gay man and straight woman where everything is on the table--but the deeper you dig into their lives, the more you start to understand that they are deeply constrained by

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Gianfranco Lentini reviews *Waiting For Waiting For Godot*
 "There's nothing [everything] to be done" about *Waiting for Waiting for Godot* at the 2013 New York International Fringe Festival. Written by Dave Hanson and directed by...

Julie Congress reviews *The Magic Mirror*
The Magic Mirror, an opera with 14 singers and a live orchestra of seven (plus a conductor!), has a sound of a magnitude unlike any other FringeNYC show. Yet while an auditory...

Andrew Rothkin reviews *The Young Olympians and The Most Amazingly Awesome Adventure Ever*
 What do you get when you combine ancient Greek mythology with puppetry, pop culture, a wacky quest, and some fun and catchy new tunes? If you're the talented cast and crew of *The Maryland*...

Jason S. Grossman reviews *The Famous Play*
 Two actors appear on stage and post an enormous sign with the playwright's contact information. A narrator enters and identifies himself as the playwright and describes what the audience is...

Kimberly Wadsworth reviews *unbidden*
 Geneticist Julia Lamb, the woman at the center of Joanne Hudson's *Unbidden*, is something of a mess. While researching a study into the human genome, Julia (Chelsea Leigh Barrett)...

David Koteles reviews *Marshall's Law*
 A man and a woman are locked in a basement. A basement where dark secrets seem to be kept, waiting to be revealed. We learn the man and woman used to be best friends, until he "stole"...

Fred Backus reviews *Mercedes Benz Awkwardly*
 Arriving from Australia to help close out the 2013 New York International Fringe Festival in its final week is *Mercedes Benz Awkwardly*, a raucous one-woman comedy about a first time...