

REVIEW

# Simple People's eloquent absurdity

BY JAY THIEMEYER  
 CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Imago is such a treasure. Consider its latest production, this one written by Carol Triffle. The concept couldn't be more timely or more rudely entertaining.

In it, Amy, a former accountant with Lehman Brothers., timidly enters the sanctuary of a homeless shelter. She looks traumatized. On the stage she is alone. She dumps her stuff on the creaky bunk and goes to get a tray from the kitchen. She reaches up to a mic to make her order and says something that sounds like "one more day," though the plastic flat she picks up with the anonymous meal and the prominent Coca-Cola can tells us, like the tray, all her days are barely digestible and equally nondescript and lacking flavor.

Amy once lived in a penthouse overlooking the great city. Now, she guards her skirts on the pavement where she had been sleeping.

Slowly — the whole play is practically mimed, every motion is so slow — she is joined by other refugees of the subprime mortgage implosion. There is Nathan, a.k.a. "Odd Job," whom she insists on calling "Odd Ball" as though they still inhabited the fraternity of their office lives in the financial tower. "Odd" is indeed extraordinarily good at assimilating himself to his environment.

He seems eternally bloodless and on the make. Milo, on the other hand, is near hysteria as he describes how cold the darkness is outside, alone on the pavement.

A fourth member is Amy's former assistant, Bob. Bob is under the covers on a nearby bunk, both oblivious to the rest and ignored. He rouses in the middle of the piece and wanders in his rumpled, dirty suit to get his tray then take his seat, then not amount to much. Just as before. Just more bereft.

Trips to the john behind a screen provide flushes for punctuation.

This work is composed of little parts, not surprising given Carol Triffle's recent plays, very nearly not theater at all. In the notes the influence of her mentor Jacque LeCog is recognized, along with playwright Robert Maxwell. I heard some Brecht-like lines, maybe because I wanted to, and a Beckett-like strain. The characters were all Pozzo's. A nondescript, eloquent depiction of the absurdity of America's securitization. Trading in financial nothings, an economy driven by securitized debt, landing the giants together in their little shelter hell.

The piece is unadorned and to the point. Lost people who once were somebodies in a society going down the drain, making characters like these inevitable. I thought it was very moving in its vulnerability and light statement of comeuppance. The morality was Vaudevillian at times, but not overdone. The poetry was clear and in a well-measured dose. Eloquence could seem really inappropriate but in this piece, it added savor.

It was all about the acting and the acting was well tuned and effortless. As is to be expected from Imago.

Sitting with another friend, herself homeless at this moment, we both inhaled it. She thought it was reasonably accurate. An artist herself, she assumed the actors had also experienced what the play

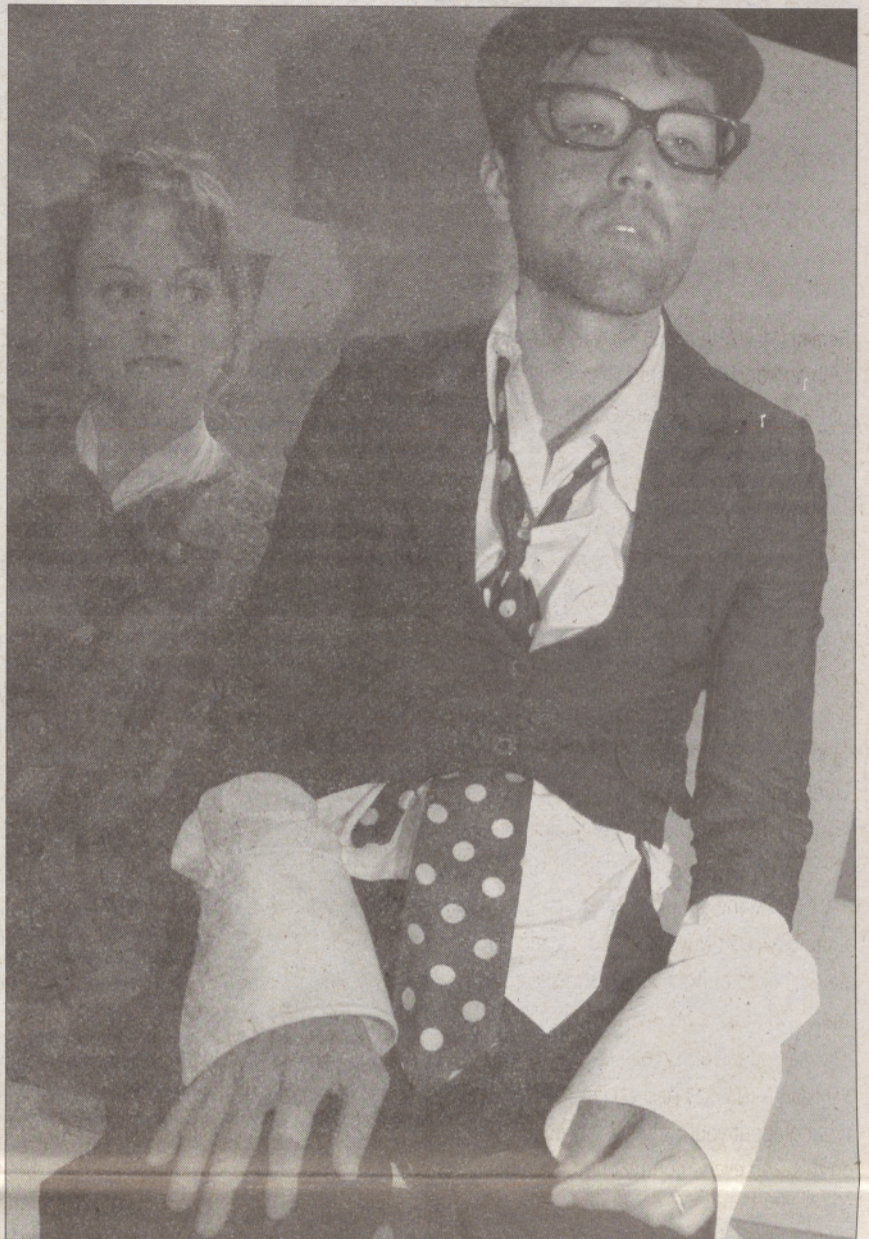


PHOTO BY JERRY MOUAWAD

Danielle Vermette and Kyle Delamarter in Imago Theater's original production "Simple People." The play, by Carol Triffle, runs through June 13.

portrayed. It seemed that way. As serious artists, rather than greedheads, they presumably knew what it was like to be on the margin, living on a very small income, or less. They seemed to have skin in the game. All in all, an affecting production, an

eloquent draft, fit for consumption. I say draft because they seem to be endlessly improving on their work. So, though there were instances where things might be tightened, it was an hour very well spent on Memorial Day.

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