

PERFORMANCE

➔ = WW Pick. Highly recommended.

Most prices listed are for advance ticket sales. At-the-door increases and so-called convenience charges may apply, so it's best to call ahead.

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TO BE CONSIDERED FOR LISTINGS, submit information at least two weeks in advance to: sgormley@wweek.com.

THEATER

OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Nesting: Vacancy

Actor and playwright Joel Patrick Durham brings back his episodic horror play for a second year. Like the first season, season two is the story of two friends navigating a creepy house plagued by supernatural forces. You can watch individual episodes or "binge watch" all four. Last year's was seriously spine tingling and full of cliff hangers, so binge watching is advised. *The Shoebox Theater, 2110 SE 10th Ave. See nestingpdx.com for episode schedule. 8 pm-10 pm Thursday-Sunday, Oct. 13-Nov. 4. \$25.*

The Turn of the Screw

When the plot revolves around two eerie orphaned children who live in an isolated English estate, you know things are going to get scary. In honor of Friday the 13th, Reader's Theatre Repertory is staging Henry James' classic psychological thriller. *Blackfish Gallery, 420 NW 9th Ave., readerstheatre.com. 8 pm Friday-Saturday, Oct. 13-14. \$10.*

Insignificance

Defunkt Theatre opens their season with Terry Johnson's satire of celebrity culture in which Marilyn Monroe explains relativity to Albert Einstein. In a hotel room, we meet thinly disguised versions of four pop culture icons, who are referred to only as the Actress, the Scientist and the Senator and the Ballplayer. The play (which inspired the 1985 movie of the same name) first premiered in 1982, but only made its stateside premiere last year. *Defunkt Theatre, 4319 SE Hawthorne Blvd., defunkttheatre.com. 7:30 pm Thursday-Sunday, Oct. 13-Nov. 18. Pay what you will, \$20 suggested.*

ALSO PLAYING

➔ **Fun Home**

Adapted from Alison Bechdel's graphical memoir, the musical tries to make sense of the cartoonist's complicated relationship with her closeted gay father, Bruce (Robert Mammana). Propelled by goofy, singalong anthems, *Fun Home* switches between three different stages of Bechdel's life. There's Alison (Aida Valentine) growing up in the funeral home where her father enforced heteronormativity on his daughter. There's Alison at college (Sara Masterson), who transforms from nervous and slumped shouldered, to belting out love songs as she discovers her sexuality and falls for a classmate named Joan (Kristen DiMercurio). Then there's Alison the narrator (Allison Mickelson), the successful cartoonist behind *Dykes to Watch Out For*, and who's attempting to understand her father through jumbled memories. The show premiered on Broadway in 2015 and won multiple Tony awards that same year. It went on tour for the first time last October, but Portland Center Stage is staging its own production. PCS' production is so intimate and charming, it's hard to imagine *Fun Home* on a giant Broadway stage. At the end of the play, Bruce remains a mystery to Alison. But Through Alison's self-discovery, we can see

Bruce's misguided hope of sparing his daughter from the pain he feels, while he remains deprived of the freedom she eventually finds. SHANNON GORMLEY. *Portland Center Stage, 128 NW 11th Ave., pcs.org. 7:30 pm Tuesday-Sunday, noon Thursday, 2 pm Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 22-Oct. 22. \$25-\$70.*

Every Brilliant Thing

Every Brilliant Thing is the story of a man and his mother, and how her attempt to kill herself when he was a child shaped the rest of his life. It's why the narrator began crafting a running list of small and large life-affirming pleasures—ice cream and roller coasters when he started the list at the age of seven, sex and meaningful conversations as he entered adulthood. Written by Duncan Macmillan, the play premiered at England's Ludlow Fringe Festival in 2013. It started its successful off-Broadway run a year later, and last fall, a film of a New York performance made its way to HBO. Though the one-man show is about living in the shadow cast by the attempted suicide of a loved one, it's playful, unapologetically structured and unapologetically sentimental. It's more like group therapy than a traditional play. Audience members are called on stage to play a vet that euthanizes the main character's childhood dog, or our narrator at seven years old who can only respond "why?" as his father struggles to explain that his mother tried to kill herself. Often cloyingly sentimental, *Every Brilliant Thing* is not for even the mildly cynical, or those who are unwilling to put aside the fact that a list of "brilliant things" is a simplistic response to a complicated issue. Still, *Every Brilliant Thing* succeeds thanks to Lamb's everyman affability as well as its communal spirit. More than anything, it's an exercise in empathy. R MITCHELL MILLER. *Portland Center Stage, 128 NW 11th Ave., pcs.org. 7:30 pm Tuesday-Saturday, 2 pm Saturday-Sunday, noon Thursday, through Nov. 5. No 7:30 pm show on Sunday, Oct. 8. \$25-\$55.*

DANCE

Portland Tango Festival

The longest-running tango festival in America returns with four nights of sultry Argentinian dancing, including all-night milongas every damn night. *Norse Hall, 111 NE 11th Ave, 503-972-3329, portlandtango-fest.com. \$10-\$35 for individual dances through Sunday.*

COMEDY

All Jane Comedy Festival

This year, Portland's all woman comedy festival will become the first comedy festival to live stream its sets. But you can see it IRL, starting with a taping of Deanne Smith's new standup special. Smith is best known for her bit about dating women who've decided it's easier to pretend to be a lesbian than deal with straight dudes. *Curious Comedy Theater, 5225 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Oct. 11-15. See alljanecomedy.com for full schedule.*

REVIEW



REAL HUMAN BEING: Greg Watanabe.

Into the Labyrinth

CAUGHT IS A SHAPE-SHIFTING PLAY THAT BLURS FACT AND FICTION.

BY BENNETT CAMPBELL FERGUSON

When you arrive at Artists Repertory Theatre for its production of *Qin (Caught)*, Mao Zedong greets you in the lobby. Actor Larry Toda, playing the infamous Chinese dictator, stands at the entrance to the first phase of the show: a crowded art exhibit filled with everything from meditation alters to chubby model cats.

It's a dizzying display that leaves you overwhelmed before you even take your seat, and that feeling of instability continues to grow once the theatrical portion of *Caught* begins. Armed with Christopher Chen's brilliant and bizarre script, director Shawn Lee has staged a show that defies description.

Caught tells the story of Lin Bo, the artist credited with creating the show's art installation and who was imprisoned by the Chinese government for political activism.

It's far from a traditional play. The first scene is a PowerPoint presentation hosted by Bo. Dressed in a dark jacket, he recalls his imprisonment after he protested against the Tiananmen Square massacre. As he describes the details of his incarceration—the abysmal food, the toilet filled with rats—he becomes so emotional that you can see sweat glistening on his forehead.

Emotions run ever higher in the following scene, which appears to be a strange mix of fiction and reality. A reporter for *The New Yorker* (Sarah Hennessy) and her editor (Chris Harder) ruthlessly grill Bo about his experiences in captivity.

As they harp on seemingly insignificant details—does it matter whether or not Bo was served cabbage soup?—the racism-tinged spectacle of two white Americans denying the legitimacy of Bo's torment becomes almost unbearable to watch.

But what exactly are we watching? *Caught* works with revelatory, insidious force as it mutates from one kind of a show into another and into yet another after that. To reveal much more than that would ruin its slippery spell.

Lee and Chen challenge your perception of both Bo and yourself. When Bo laments that he is viewed as a "symbol of all Chinese suffering," it's easy to pity him as a tragic icon. Yet as *Caught* gradually reveals Bo to be a flawed and multifaceted human being, you're forced to recognize that to merely pity him is to deny his humanity.

The cast navigate Bo's story with grace, and reveal new dimensions of their characters with every scene. Actor Greg Watanabe's performance is both fluid and shape-shifting.

Like most of *Caught*, it's hard to explain the full extent of Watanabe's work without spoiling the whole play. But for all its deception, *Caught* is wildly entertaining. Its hairpin narrative turns may be unsettling, but they're the reason the entire experience is a giddy thrill. *Caught* rewrites beliefs about what theater can and should be in real time. **WWW**

SEE IT: *Caught* plays at Artists Repertory Theatre, 1515 SW Morrison St., artistsrep.org. Through Oct. 29.