
IN ARABIA,
WE'D ALL BE
KINGS

1-800 POSTCARDS

LAByrinth Theatre Company & Center Stage, NY Present

IN ARABIA, WE'D ALL BE KINGS
by Stephen Adly Guirgis

Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman

FEATURING:

Mark Hammer*
Russell G. Jones
Tiprin Mandalay
Ana Ortiz*
Begonya Plaza*
David Zayas*
Salvatore Inzerillo
Trevor Long*
Chris McGarry*
Richard Petrocelli*
Felix Solis*
Liza Zayas

* Appearing courtesy of AEA

STAGE MANAGER: Doreen Feldman
SOUND: Eric DeArmon
LIGHTING: Sarah Sidman
COSTUMES: Mimi O'Donnell
SET: Max DeArmon

JUNE 23RD - JULY 17TH
WEDNESDAY - SATURDAY 8PM
Tickets $12
For Reservations Call 212.929.2228

Opening Night Benefit . Thursday July 8th . Reception to Follow
Beverages Courtesy of Bacardi-Martini USA, Inc.

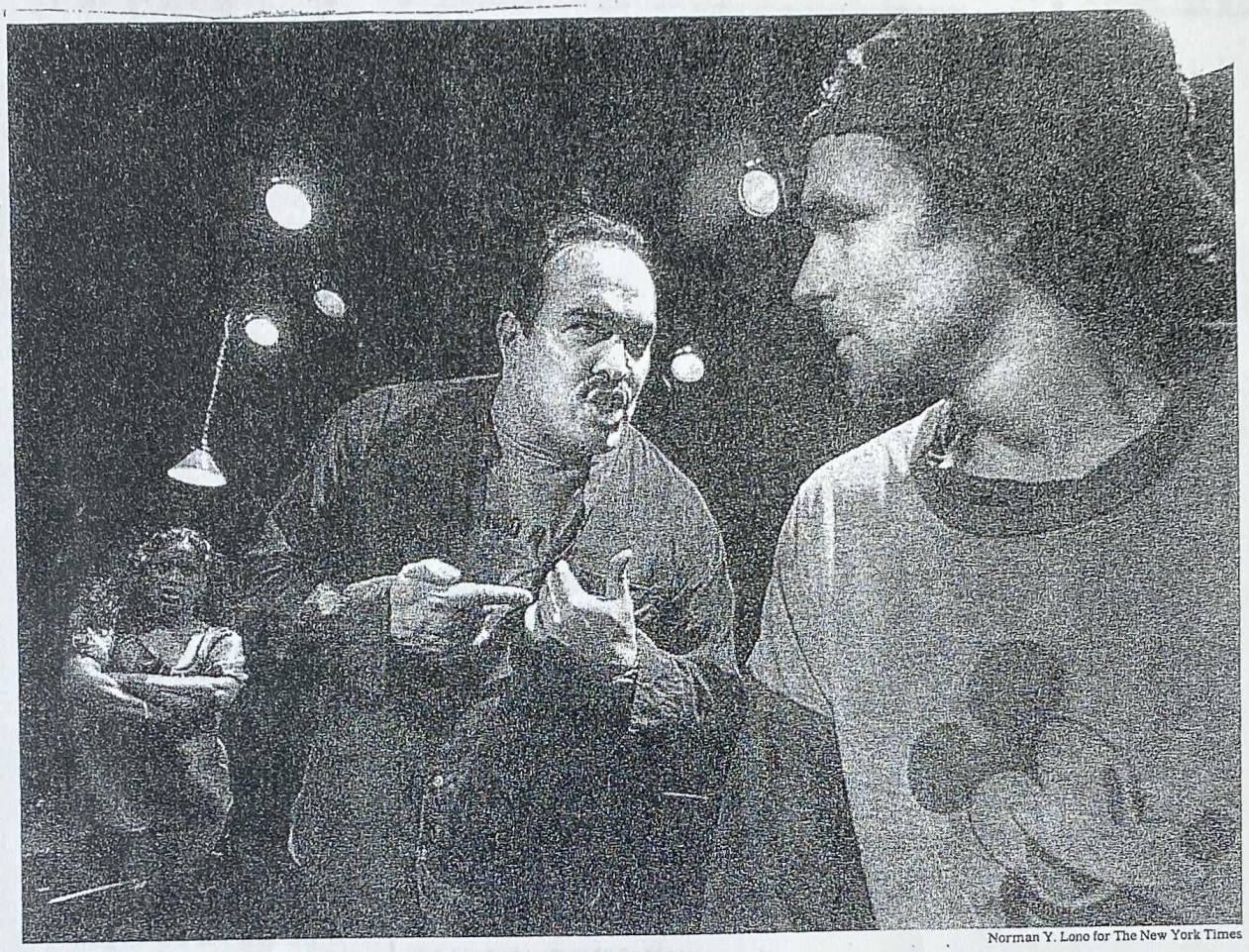
CENTERSTAGE new york

CENTER STAGE,NY 48W. 21st. Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10010•212.929.2228

IN ARABIA, WE'D ALL BE KINGS

REVIEWS

THE PETE SANDERS GROUP
1560 Broadway, Suite 1101 / New York, NY 10036
(212) 730-0067 / Fax (212) 730-0394 / email: info@petesandersgroup.com



Norman Y. Lono for The New York Times

From left, Liza Zayas, David Zayas and Trevor Long in "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings," by Stephen Adly Guirgis, presented by the Labyrinth Theater Company and Center Stage, N.Y.

THEATER REVIEW

A Lot of Degradation and a Little Bit of Humor

By WILBORN HAMPTON

IN ARABIA, WE'D ALL BE KINGS

By Stephen Adly Guirgis; directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman; produced by Eric and Jill DeArmon and David Deblinger. Lighting by Sarah Sidman; costumes by Mimi O'Donnell; sound by Mr. DeArmon; composer, Daniel Harnett; sets by Max DeArmon; assistant director, Mr. Adly Guirgis. Presented by Labyrinth and Center Stage, N.Y. At 48 West 21st Street, fourth floor, Chelsea.

WITH: Russell G. Jones (Greer), Trevor Long (Skank), David Zayas (Lenny), Liza Zayas (Daisy), Ana Ortiz (Demaris), Tiprin Mandalay (Chicky), Sal Inzerillo (Charlie), Richard Petrocelli (Jake), Mark Hammer (Sammy), and Begonya Plaza (Mrs. Reyes).

The desperation is anything but quiet in "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings," a harrowing new play by Stephen Adly Guirgis that is being given a menacing staging under Philip Seymour Hoffman's direction by the Labyrinth Theater Company.

As soon as the lights come up on the seedy bar that Mr. Adly Guirgis's misfits call home, Lenny, a week out of prison and very angry about life in general, snarls at anyone who crosses his line of vision and pulls a knife on a sniveling addict he calls Skank just for reaching for a bowl of peanuts.

The decibel level keeps rising as the emotional stakes get higher.

"In Arabia" is an old-fashioned slice-of-life play that takes place around Times Square before Walt Disney replaced Damon Runyon as resident folklorist, and it involves a collection of modern-day losers that even Runyon might find hard to stomach.

Zoot-suited craps players have been replaced by junkies in dirty T-shirts who will do anything for drug money, and the Salvation Army evangelists are now religious nuts who carve up the prostitutes rather than preach to them.

There is no romance in this Times Square. The happiest ever after one teen-age girl can imagine is for her, her friend and her boyfriend to end up together in the Betty Ford clinic.

Mr. Adly Guirgis spends the first half-hour introducing a lineup of characters one would be loath to meet offstage. But just when it seems the play will settle for the shock value of its raw and violent language and imagery — with some comic relief thrown in at the expense of the wasted lives it portrays — Mr. Adly Guirgis begins to tie all his loose ends together in a grim and sad portrait of life on the streets, almost an updated "Balm in Gilead" for the 1990's.

In addition to Lenny (David Zayas) and Skank (Trevor Long), there are Demaris (Ana Ortiz), a teen-ager who pulls a gun on her mother (Begonya Plaza); Chicky (Tiprin Mandalay), Skank's devoted girlfriend except when she needs crack money; Charlie (Sal Inzerillo), a kindhearted bartender, and Jake (Richard Petrocelli), the bar's owner.

And, in a gem of a performance by Mark Hammer, there is Sammy, an elderly alcoholic who can't hold a thought for more than 30 seconds and who provides cryptic commentary on life from a corner table.

Mr. Adly Guirgis pulls no punches and offers no sociological lessons about the failures of society. The degradation these characters endure to feed their habit — in one brutal scene Skank is humiliated by Greer (Russell G. Jones), a gay man slumming, as he negotiates sex for $20 — is only occasionally broken by humor.

One funny scene finds Demaris and Chicky trying unsuccessfully to hustle tricks on the street. "You've got to smile," Chicky advises Demaris, who keeps scaring off prospective customers.

"You've got to be like a party waiting to happen." When Demaris immediately frightens off another prospect, Chicky suggests, "You could do something else to get money, like rob."

Mr. Hoffman, an actor making his directorial debut, has mounted a crisp and taut production and has molded his good cast into a strong ensemble that never seems to pause to catch its breath. Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Long are especially effective.

The outlook for the characters in "In Arabia" is bleak. In a scene in which Lenny applies for a job handing out fliers, the interviewer asks him, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" The line gets a laugh in performance. But as one leaves the theater, the question returns to haunt. If any of these characters is alive in five years, it will be a small miracle.

Time Out New York Issue 198 July 8–15, 1999

THEATER

Critics' pick

In Arabia We'd All Be Kings
(Off-Off Broadway) Star of the film *Happiness* and the Drama Dept.'s recent production of Richard Greenberg's one-act *The Author's Voice*, Philip Seymour Hoffman tries his hand at directing with this terrifically acted ensemble piece, which takes potshots at that poor little underdog Mickey Mouse. Watch for Ana Ortiz's bravura performance as a teenage mother with a serious chip on her shoulder.

In Arabia We'd All Be Kings
By Stephen Adly Guirgis. Dir. Philip Seymour Hoffman. With ensemble cast. Center Stage (see Off-Off Broadway).

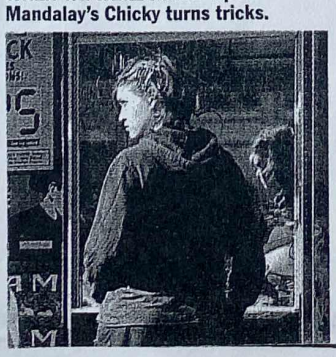
Who ever said you need a good story? Surely not the appreciative audience for *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings*, Stephen Adly Guirgis's gritty glance at the underbelly of Giuliani's Times Square. Hardly hampered by its thin, ill-focused plot, the terrifically entertaining tragedy proves that well-drawn characters, electric dialogue and an excellent ensemble are more than enough.

After six years in prison, Lenny (David Zayas) returns to his old watering hole to discover that his girlfriend, Daisy (Liza Zayas), hasn't been faithful, that most of his friends have died or been imprisoned, and that the neighborhood's landscape looks markedly cleaner. "Disney's spreading, just like the AIDS," an old flame (Begonya Plaza) tells him. The play's down-and-out characters—drug addicts, prostitutes, broke teenage mothers—seem to be marking time by drinking in a bar preyed upon by real-estate developers and walking the streets tracked by an overly aggressive police force. Sammy (Mark Hammer), the elderly fixture in a corner of the room, rambles on hilariously about his late wife. Chicky (Tiprin Mandalay) and Demaris (Ana Ortiz) dream about fleeing home to live with a movie star. In one of the play's few didactic gestures, a crackhead (Trevor Long) wears a Mickey Mouse T-shirt.

But *Arabia* is not only gloom and doom. Guirgis has a real talent for capturing the wit and absurdity in the most hopeless situation, and in a beautifully realized scene between Chicky and a mentally retarded boy (Sal Inzerillo), he demonstrates even a light romantic touch. The large multicultural cast is almost flawless; Hammer is subtle and clever, and Inzerillo is nothing short of heartbreaking. But Ortiz supplies this show's brilliance. Playing a hardened Puerto Rican teenager with the bad habit of waving a gun in people's faces, she has an authenticity that you rarely see onstage. You can't keep your eyes off her as she effortlessly shifts gears from frightening rage to childish good humor.

Debut director Philip Seymour Hoffman teases out fine performances, but he can't seem to make the meandering narrative coalesce. Perhaps Guirgis, whose evocative prose contains the spirit of Danny Hoch's bittersweet urban monologues, should have turned *Arabia* into a series of thematically connected character studies and left storytelling to less talented writers.—*Jason Zinoman*

WHEN WE WERE *KINGS* **Tiprin Mandalay's Chicky turns tricks.**



JAMIE MULLINS

▶★ ***In Arabia We'd All Be Kings***
Center Stage NY, 48 W 21st St between Fifth and Sixth Aves (929-2228). Subway: 1, 9 to 23rd St. $12. Wed–Sat 8pm. Through Jul 17. Stephen Adly-Guirgis's new play is about a group of lowlifes and rejects who kill time in the new antiseptic Times Square. Philip Seymour Hoffman (*Happiness*) directs.

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER
Friday, July 16, 1999
www.nydailynews.com

Losers of 'Arabia': Fine actors show their seedier side in grim play

IN ARABIA, WE'D ALL BE KINGS. By Stephen Adly-Guirgis. With Mark Hammer, Sal Inzerillo, Russell G. Jones, Trevor Long, Tiprin Mandalay, Chris McGerey, Ana Ortiz, Richard Petrocelli, Begonya Plaza, Felix Solís, David Zayas, Liza Zayas. Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. Lighting by Sarah Sidman. Costumes by Mimi O'Donnell. At Center Stage, 48 W. 21st St. Tickets, $12. (212) 929-2228.

As if we needed to be reminded that New York is brimming with first-rate actors in search of a playwright, along comes "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings."

This new piece is really more of a showcase for fine acting than it is a play, but you can't dismiss the author's knack for brutally realistic dialogue.

In fact, there are moments that are so authentic, you feel as though you're in the seedy W. 43rd St. bar where the play takes place. Not that you'll be very happy with what you hear in that bar: "In Arabia" introduces us to a dozen of life's losers — and we're talking real bottom-rungers here.

Within this grim environment, everyone's either a con artist or a wannabe. There's the beefy and blustery Lenny, who's been out of jail a week but still lives with his mother. And there's Demaris, who has her mother down on the floor — with a gun to her head. There's also a pair of crackheads, Skank and Chicky, who are trying to figure out how to turn a fast buck.

"In Arabia" unfolds as a series of isolated episodes, and you have to read between the scenes, so to speak, to connect all the dots that make up the play. Fortunately, the acting by the 12-member ensemble is uniformly exceptional.

InTheater Magazine - on stands Friday, July 16th

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings

By Stephen Adly-Guirgis
Reviewed by Ricky Spears

There were loud moans as a theater assistant shut off the only air conditioner at Center Stage, NY just seconds before a recent performance of Stephen Adly-Guirgis' *In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings*. The only consolation for this assault to the senses on such a hot summer night was the thunderous applause when the final scene of this exciting new work was performed.

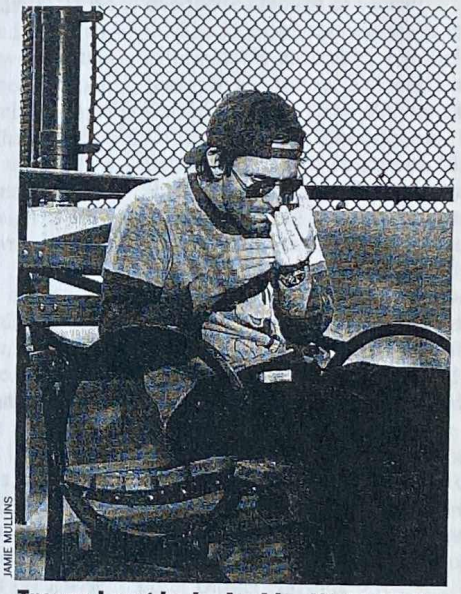
If Adly-Guirgis is not one of the freshest new voices in theater he is certainly one of the most courageous. A modern morality tale set in a dive in present-day New York City, *In Arabia* is played like an obituary for modern urban life. Why is it that plays about barflies and their hangers-on are so damned bleak, and why do we love seeing these shoddy lives unfold so tragically?

A desperate group of people assemble in various couplings at Jake's (Richard Petrocelli) bar to deal drugs, take drugs, evade police, and generally yell at one another. A Latina spitfire named Demaris (Ana Ortiz) pulls a gun on her mother (Begonya Plaza) without apologies. Lenny (David Zayas), recently out of prison, battles it out with his wife, Daisy (Liza Zayas) and a trippy, doll-faced young woman named Chicky (Tiprin Mandalay) dreams of a life in California, while her dirty-faced lover, Skank (Trevor Long), boasts of his famous L.A. friends and the time when he used to be an actor.

Adly-Guirgis' dialogue is crisp, clear, and dynamic. When the nelly queen Greer (the terrific Russell G. Jones), a newcomer to the bar, tries to smooth-talk the sunken-eyed Skank into a $20 bathroom tryst, you know what Greer means when he says, "Your eyes have tragedy in them. Tragedy is sexy."

The most beautiful and tenderly played scene in the play is a precious card game between soulful Charlie the bartender (Sal Inzerillo) and the wild Chicky. Charlie is in love with Chicky, and has an almost reverent lust for her. Inzerillo has a real Ron Eldard quality about him; he's one to watch.

Max DeArmon's simple set is evocative, and Sarah Sidman's lighting decidedly plain and forthright. Mimi O'Donnell's costumes are raunchy and right as the actors work up a sweat under the fiercely hot lights. In his directorial debut, the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman (*The Author's Voice, Shopping and F***ing*) has made a splashy debut. There's a born-to-be-a-director quality to his work, and he rings every ounce of character out of his actors and their dialogue.



JAMIE MULLINS

Trevor Long in *In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings.*

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings is a magnificent achievement from the LAByrinth Theatre Company and Center Stage, NY for those seeking bold, visual theater — with or without the air-conditioning.

BACKSTAGE®
The Performing Arts Weekly
July 16 - 22, 1999
Price: $2.75 (NY, NJ, CT, PA) $3.25 (Elsewhere)

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings

Reviewed by Elias Stimac

Presented by LAByrinth Theatre Company and Center Stage, NY, 48 W. 21st St., NYC, July 8-17.

"In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is a fascinating portrait of a group of New York City denizens who will do anything to survive. The world premiere of **Stephen Adly Guirgis'** drama is currently at Center Stage, NY, and has been given a high-caliber production by the LAByrinth Theatre Company.

Bars have always been a refuge for down-on-their-luck wanderers, and the rundown tavern in "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is no exception. As regulars and newcomers wander into the well-worn watering hole, emotions simmer and boil as friendships form and relationships shatter. Desperation is the drink of choice for these barflies, and while a ray of hope may occasionally pierce the darkness, it's not enough to save many of them from themselves or their fates.

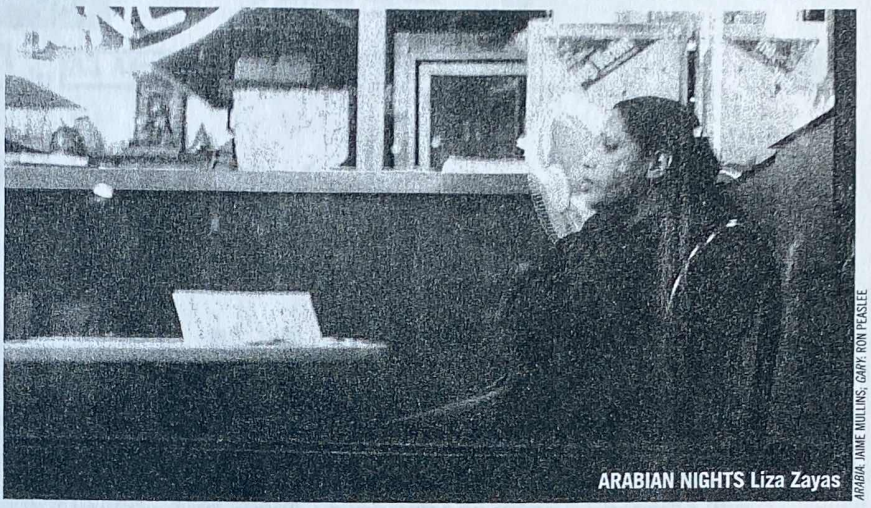
Guirgis has filled his script with colorful characters and daring dialogue, making the modern milieu all the more convincing and compelling. The writer does not pull any punches in dramatizing life on the street, and the gamble pays off with both harsh and hilarious results. **Philip Seymour Hoffman** has directed the piece with equal amounts of humor, heart, and humanity and has instilled a level of dignity to this otherwise overlooked faction of society.

The talented cast members make a formidable ensemble, and include **Russell G. Jones, Trevor Long, David Zayas, Liza Zayas, Ana Ortiz, Tiprin Mandalay, Sal Inzerillo, Richard Petrocelli, Mark Hammer, Felix Solis, Chris McGerey,** and **Begonya Plaza.** Playwright, director, and actors combine to offer indelible insight into these shortsighted strangers who become a reluctant family of sorts.

On the technical side, "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is supported by an able group of theatre artists. **Max DeArmon** is responsible for the set design, and **Sarah Sidman** provides the shadowy lighting. Other top-notch technical support comes from costumer **Mimi O'Donnell**, sound designer **Eric DeArmon**, and composer **Daniel Harnett.**

the pete sanders group

HX
THE TOTALLY BIASED POLITICALLY INCORRECT PARTY PAPER
ISSUE 411 3 JUL 1999



ARABIAN NIGHTS Liza Zayas

ARABIA. JAIME MULLINS; *GARY*. RON PEASLEE

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings

If not for director Philip Seymour Hoffman, *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* might have drifted across the cultural radar as standard-issue, grungy, off-Broadway material. A recognizable actor of stage (*Shopping and Fucking*) and film (*Boogie Nights*), Hoffman gamely tries his hand at directing Stephen Adly-Guirgis' modest morality play, and he sparks some genuine excitement while maneuvering his actors through a seething pit of humanity.

Adly-Guirgis' gritty character piece could easily be subtitled *The Iceman Cometh II: The New Class*. Placed in a Times Square dive pub where everybody knows your name, *Arabia* inspects a handful of miscreants on the verge of destruction—people we all know and love. Lenny (David Zayas), fresh from a prison excursion, tries to rebuild his life to impress his girlfriend, now the sleazy sex kitten of the bar owner. Lenny's homoerotic prison days are exposed by a sassy, gun-wielding Latina named Demaris (Ana Ortiz), who routinely threatens her mother's life and goes whoring to support her son. She takes prostitute lessons from Chicky (Tiprin Mandalay), a baby-voiced crack addict who ignores the charms of a kind, simple-minded barkeep and dates Skank (Trevor Long), a disheveled, shifty cokehead who'll do *anything* for a dollar.

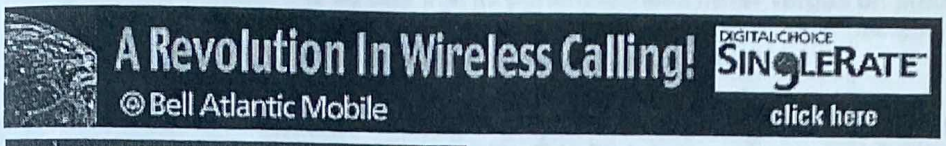
In real life, people this depraved aren't half as interesting, but on stage, their conversations blossom into mind-numbing soliloquies and their every move is laced with universally revealing (and painfully obvious) symbolism. Though Adly-Guirgis has created some undeniably fascinating characters, he seems merely concerned with steeping them in literary importance. (Surprise! A Bible-verse spouting psychopath kills one character!) The grit is supposed to reflect the layers of human suffering; instead, it just reflects more grit.

It's doubtful Hoffman has the same opinion, though his direction focuses on the nuances of his actors—not the story—which saves the play from static dreariness. Hoffman allows the actors to cut loose, and some scenes involving just a couple actors are intensely well-grounded. For example, Skank attempts to talk a few bucks out of a gay man, only to have the tables turned and find himself bargaining for the dollar amount of the sex act he's about to perform. Set within the play's disparately unconnected miniacts, the scene is a moment of pure, inhumane desperation, and it reverberates into the less interesting scenes that follow.

Hoffman is most successful with Ortiz, who is convincingly terrifying as a low-income mom turned wild, cornered tiger. Her unsuccessful attempt at prostitution—filled with enough sass to exterminate a precinct of undercover cops—is a vacation from the starkness that envelopes the rest of the play. Too bad her fate is supposed to make us feel sorrow for the human condition; I was too busy envying her bad-girl recklessness. In my Arabia, she's already queen.

In Arabia We'd All Be Kings, 8pm Tues–Fri, at Center Stage, NY (48 W 21st St), $12. For tickets, call 929-2228.

U.S. 1560 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036 (212) 730 0067 Fax (212) 730 0394



In Arabia We'd All Be Kings ✓

mail this to a friend

editorial profile

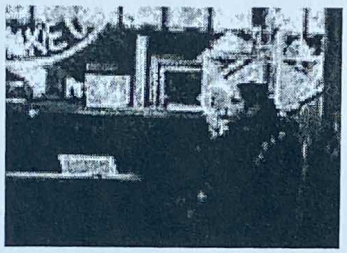
LOCATION:
Center Stage NY
48 W. 21st Street, Fourth Floor
New York

HOURS:
Jun 23-Jul 30 Mon-Fri 8:00pm

PRICES:
$25; $15 for students with ID.

TICKET INFORMATION:
Call (212) 929-2228.

buzz post your comments!



The critics have discovered "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" because, like a beacon lighting the way on the rocky coast of Off-Off-Broadway, the shining name of Philip Seymour Hoffman is associated with this production. Hoffman, a much admired young actor on stage ("Shopping and Fucking") and film ("Happiness"), is making his directorial debut with this play. Critics have naturally been intrigued to discover what he is up to. For the most part, said critics have come away mightily impressed with Hoffman's directorial derring-do even as they ignore the play.

Big mistake. We agree that Hoffman does exceptional work, but he has a vibrant and visceral script by Stephen Adly Guirgis with which to ply his new trade. Therefore, maybe Hoffman should be given credit not just for his direction, but for his choice of material, as well.

The play begins in a hurricane of testosterone as a bullying barroom patron named Lenny (David Zayas) throws his weight around in a nearly empty gin joint. His bluster, however, is matched by the resolve of his woman, Daisy (Liza Zayas). Their confrontation establishes the pattern for the power struggles that follow between all of the play's characters. And power struggles are exactly what this play is about.

The characters are anything but royalty. Losers, loners, and the left behind, they are society's dregs, but each dog still wants to be top dog and they bark and bite until someone is forced to bare their throat in submission. In the midst of the snarling, however, there is compassion, and in the midst of the compassion, there is redemption.

There are several discreet relationships in this carefully orchestrated play. Each set of characters eventually intersects with the others, their connections slowly revealed as their stories unfold. For instance, a sweet, if simple-minded whore and a desperate junkie, each met by the audience in wholly different scenes, turn out to be lovers. There is a richness in this kind of storytelling because of the texture it paints upon the lives of its characters.

As is often the case with actors who direct, Hoffman gives his players the chance to show their stuff. In particular, Trevor Long, in the role of the sniveling Skank, gives a performance of exquisite subtlety. When another character meaningfully tells him, "You have tragedy in your eyes," the line

is so true that its portentousness never verges on pretension. In addition to Long, Sal Inzerillo winningly underplays a sympathetic bartender, and Ana Ortiz is electric as a violent young woman.

Hoffman also displays a seamless stagecraft in which there is both kinetic energy and fluidity. Eric DeArmon assists in that fluidity with his design of a simple, evocative set, and the look of the play is further enhanced by Mimi O'Donnell's costume designs which are right on the (lack of) money. Finally, not to be overlooked, the playwright's vision is additionally protected by virtue of the fact that he is credited as the production's assistant director.—Scott & Barbara Siegel

How complex are you?
Out-and-about ← → Homebody
newyork.citysearch.com
Navigate the site
search for in All Area within All Sections go!

Off-Off Broadway Show within "Theater"

56 events

p. 1 2 3 next

events

Current list sorted: by date

plot list on map

07/12 - 07/28

The Strawberry One-Act Festival Vote for the best new one-acts from six different series selections in the Riant's annual festival.
at Riant Theatre

06/23 - 07/30

In Arabia We'd All Be Kings Stephen Adley-Guirgis brings us a cornucopia of characters—from alcoholic hookers to ex-con crackheads—in his new play about the dark side of Times Square. Actor Philip Seymour Hoffman has made an excellent choice of script for his directing debut.
at Center Stage NY

✓ = editor's pick

06/22 - 07/30

Living with Dragons Pulse's Studio Season '99 features plays performed first in bare-bones style, then re-worked for an encore presenation. Kevin Brofsky's "Living with Dragons" tells the story of a 1960s housewife attempting to hold her family together after she is diagnosed with a rare cancer.
at Pulse Ensemble Theatre

07/07 - 07/30

Tiger Tail After "Not About Nightingales" and "Tennessee Williams Remembered," here's another chance to rake over the ashes of one of America's greatest. Unfortunately "Tiger Tail" is a minor script that's getting no help from an affectless cast.
at Harold Clurman Theatre

07/09 - 07/31

Preaching to the Perverted Notorious performance artist and NEA Four "member" Holly Hughes is back with this solo tour of the dark side of democracy.
at Dixon Place

07/08 - 07/31

Rubicon In Gene Franklin Smith's political thriller, set in 2003, a closeted gay Vice President is suddenly thrust into power.
at Wings Theater

06/05 - 07/31

Sheridan Square This cabaret-style play with music about three generations of gay men features tunes ranging from Irving Berlin through Kander and Ebb to Sondheim. Conceived and written by Phil Geoffrey Bond, starring Tim Cahill.
at Duplex

07/07 - 07/31

TEATRO Novità e curiosità a Broadway e dintorni. Due commedie di Ackermann in contemporanea a New York: delude "The Urn", ma "Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight" è eccellente

di Mario Fratti



Il giovane autore Peter Ackerman ha due commedie in città. **"Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight"** (Promenade Th., 76th & Broadway) è eccellente. Tre coppie in tre letti differenti si dicono cose assurde, comiche, sexy, insultanti, divertenti. Particolarmente esilarante la relazione fra Grace (Clea Lewis), un'intellettuale, che va a letto con un gangster per avere azione invece di parole, ed il gangster (Jeffrey Donovan) che vorrebbe respirare di tanto in tanto e parlare un po'. Deludente, invece, il secondo atto della seconda commedia. Parliamo di **"The Urn"** (Irish Center, 553 West 51st). Comincia in modo interessante. Il padre è morto e le sue ceneri sono ora in un'urna. Ha lasciato un testamento in cui dice che nessuno deve guardare dentro l'urna. Suscita quindi curiosità in figli e parenti. Che ci sarà? Litigano in modo divertente. La più vocale è la figlia (Schyler Wylie). Non vuole assolutamente contraddire la volontà del defunto. Muore poco dopo anche la madre. Stessa urna? Applausi per gli attori. Il secondo atto ci mostra moglie e marito vent'anni prima. I due (Greta Storace e Frank Vogt) si giurano amore. Questo dovrebbe spiegare perché la moglie muore subito dopo il marito. Tiepidi applausi.

Dan Fields ha adattato novelle di Roald Dahl per il teatro Blue Heron (123 East 24th). La padrona di casa (Joan Rosenfeld) è dolce e gentile ma sta preparando la morte dell'inquilino (Derek Milman). Mrs. Bixby (Joan Rosenfels) ha un amante che le regala una pelliccia. Come giustificare il regalo all'innocuo marito dentista (Michael Gaston)? Escogita uno stratagemma che le costa caro. La pelliccia finisce sulle spalle della giovane amante del marito (Jules Cazadessus). Un incontro in treno crea terribili ricordi. Il supposto nemico non è tale. Nel quarto atto unico ammiriamo Michael Gaston come un "gatto" che crea problemi fra marito e moglie. Bravi attori, abilmente diretti da D. Fields.

Il convincente attore Philip Seymour Hoffman s'improvvisa regista e mette in scena con verve **"In Arabia We'd All Be Kings"** di Stephen Adly-Guirgis (teatro Center Stage - 48 West 21st). Un bar dove accadono strani incontri. Greer (Russell G. Jones) compra sesso sfruttando la disperazione e la miseria di un cliente. David e Liza Zayas sono una coppia che litiga. Mark Hammer è un saggio anziano che dice le cose più strane. Il padrone del bar (Richard Petrocelli) è un duro che minaccia e ricatta tutti. Le sue giovani prostitute son tutte bravissime (Ana Ortiz e Tiprin Mandalay). Anni Novanta in un crudele realismo. Un testo che fa riflettere sul nostro immediato futuro. Ben diretto. Caldi applausi a tutti. All'autore piacciono certamente le taverne desolate di Eugene O'Neill.

Ho la tendenza a lodare quel che c'è d'interessante in uno spettacolo, anche se l'insieme è deludente. In **"Automatic Earth"** di Kevin Cunningham (Signature Th., 555 West 42nd) la compagnia "3-Legged Dog" propone un testo di morbosa avanguardia. Vining Hamke ha avuto una ferita cerebrale. Finisce in un manicomio. Vedremo per due ore una decina di pazzi che si agitano e si lamentano in palcoscenico. Vining (P.J. Sosko) rischia la sua vita quando s'infila nel letto di una bella donna. Vien fortunatamente perdonato ed amato. Che ho ammirato in questa produzione? Un ottimo video che ci mostra la dinamica di tempeste ed uragani. Uno sfondo che si fa osservare. Bisogna inoltre lodare il regista Rick Mordecan per aver scelto una narratrice che ci guida con stile in questa storia d'intricata avanguardia. Si tratta dalle bella, elegante Vera Beren che indossa una vistosa cappa grigia sotto la quale vedremo poi un magnifico vestito rosso e nero, e più tardi una sottoveste semitrasparente. Sale di tanto in tanto i gradini di una scala a chiocciola e ci parla con toni sensuali e suadenti. Un linguaggio da testi letterari e scientifici. Qualche spettatore ha lasciato il teatro prima della fine. Speriamo che non si siano scoraggiati e tornino a godersi il teatro-teatro, dove la storia è ben chiara ed umanamente valida. Disegno video di Wild Kind. Disegno costumi di Cristina Ruales.

Nel teatro Beacon, uno dei più suggestivi di New York (74th & Broadway), Mr. Shelly Garrett, scrittore, regista e produttore presenta la sua nuova commedia **"Beauty Shop"**. Siamo naturalmente in un negozio da parrucchiere che ha come sfondo una bella New York fatta di luci argentate. Ci sono naturalmente belle donne con ricchi attributi, floride e gagliarde. C'è invidia, amore, gelosia, pettegolezzo. Ma il centro dell'attenzione era il personaggio "gay". Si faceva in quattro per esagerare i gesti e lo sculettamento di un effeminato. Tutti afro-americani in scena. Quasi tutti afro-americani nel pubblico che si sbellicava dalle risa. Uno spettacolo che viene dalla California dove ha avuto due milioni di spettatori.

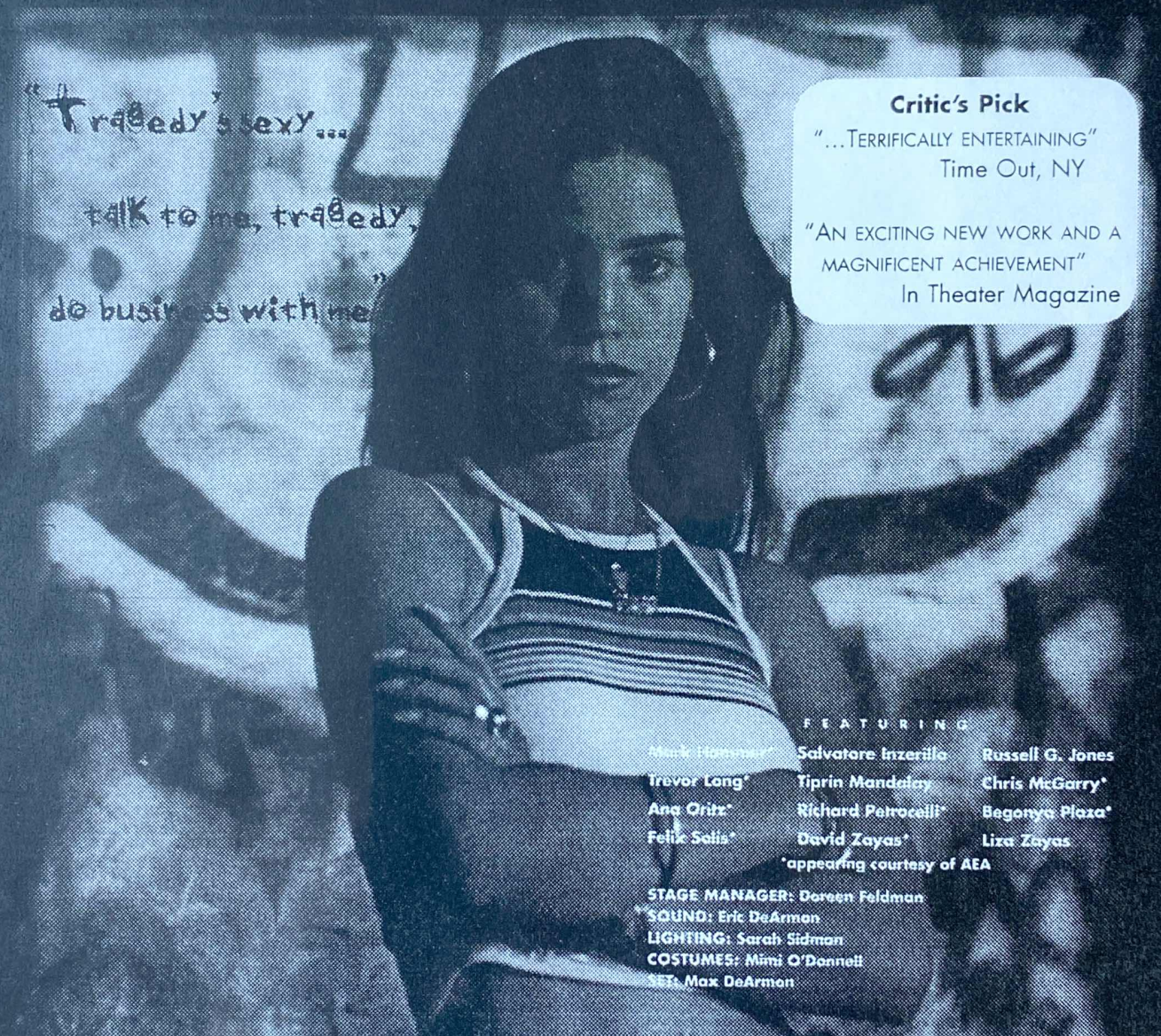
Nella foto, Patricia Buckley, Matthew Lawler, Scott Prendergast, Schuyler Grant e John Wylie in "The Urn" (© Virginie Blachère)

LABYRINTH THEATRE & CENTER STAGE NY PRESENT

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings

by Stephen Adly Guirgis

directed by Phillip Seymour Hoffman



Critic's Pick

"...TERRIFICALLY ENTERTAINING"
Time Out, NY

"AN EXCITING NEW WORK AND A MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENT"
In Theater Magazine

FEATURING

Mark Hammer*	Salvatore Inzerillo	Russell G. Jones
Trevor Long*	Tiprin Mandeley	Chris McGarry*
Ana Ortiz*	Richard Petrocelli*	Begonya Plaza*
Felix Solis*	David Zayas*	Liza Zayas

*appearing courtesy of AEA

STAGE MANAGER: Doreen Feldman
SOUND: Eric DeArman
LIGHTING: Sarah Sidman
COSTUMES: Mimi O'Donnell
SETS: Max DeArman

EXTENDED!!

Tuesday 7/20 thru Friday 7/23 only

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL 212.929.2228

Center Stage, NY 48 West 21st street, 4th floor, New York, NY 10010 212.929.2228

funded in part by the N.Y.C. Dept. of Cultural Affairs

Max DeArmon's simple set is evocative, and Sarah Sidman's lighting decidedly plain and forthright.





InTheater Magazine - on stands Friday, July 16th

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings

By Stephen Adly-Guirgis
Reviewed by Ricky Spears

There were loud moans as a theater assistant shut off the only air conditioner at Center Stage, NY just seconds before a recent performance of Stephen Adly-Guirgis' *In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings*. The only consolation for this assault to the senses on such a hot summer night was the thunderous applause when the final scene of this exciting new work was performed.

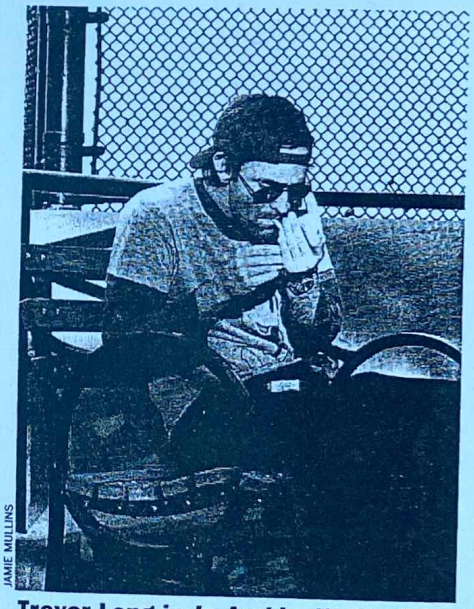
If Adly-Guirgis is not one of the freshest new voices in theater he is certainly one of the most courageous. A modern morality tale set in a dive in present-day New York City, *In Arabia* is played like an obituary for modern urban life. Why is it that plays about barflies and their hangers-on are so damned bleak, and why do we love seeing these shoddy lives unfold so tragically?

A desperate group of people assemble in various couplings at Jake's (Richard Petrocelli) bar to deal drugs, take drugs, evade police, and generally yell at one another. A Latina spitfire named Demaris (Ana Ortiz) pulls a gun on her mother (Begonya Plaza) without apologies. Lenny (David Zayas), recently out of prison, battles it out with his wife, Daisy (Liza Zayas) and a trippy, doll-faced young woman named Chicky (Tiprin Mandalay) dreams of a life in California, while her dirty-faced lover, Skank (Trevor Long), boasts of his famous L.A. friends and the time when he used to be an actor.

Adly-Guirgis' dialogue is crisp, clear, and dynamic. When the nelly queen Greer (the terrific Russell G. Jones), a newcomer to the bar, tries to smooth-talk the sunken-eyed Skank into a $20 bathroom tryst, you know what Greer means when he says, "Your eyes have tragedy in them. Tragedy is sexy."

The most beautiful and tenderly played scene in the play is a precious card game between soulful Charlie the bartender (Sal Inzerillo) and the wild Chicky. Charlie is in love with Chicky, and has an almost reverent lust for her. Inzerillo has a real Ron Eldard quality about him; he's one to watch.

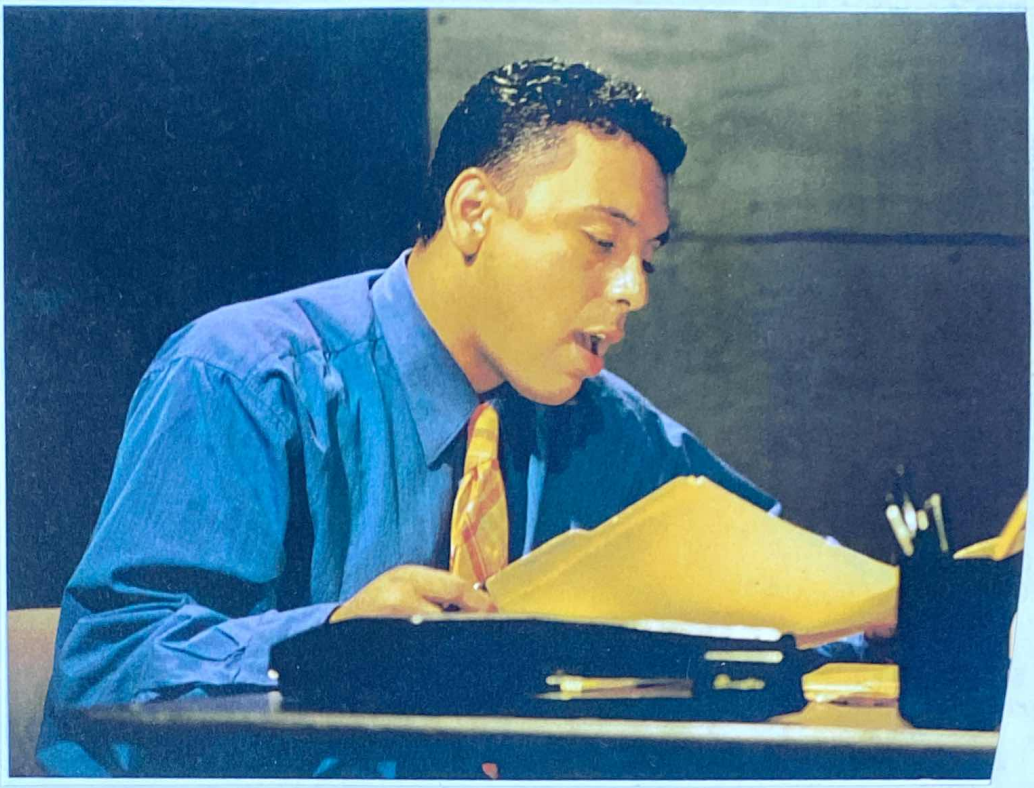
Max DeArmon's simple set is evocative, and Sarah Sidman's lighting decidedly plain and forthright. Mimi O'Donnell's costumes are raunchy and right as the actors work up a sweat under the fiercely hot lights. In his directorial debut, the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman (*The Author's Voice, Shopping and F***ing*) has made a splashy debut. There's a born-to-be-a-director quality to his work, and he rings every ounce of character out of his actors and their dialogue.

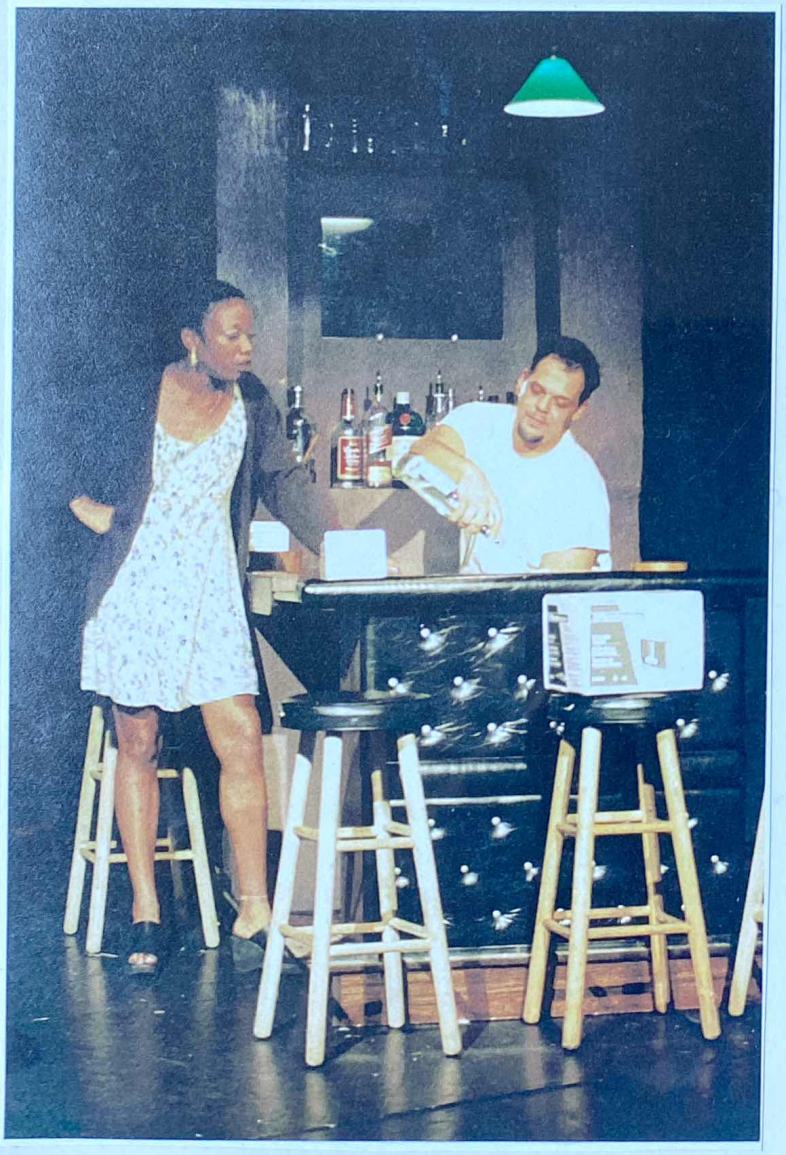

JAMIE MULLINS

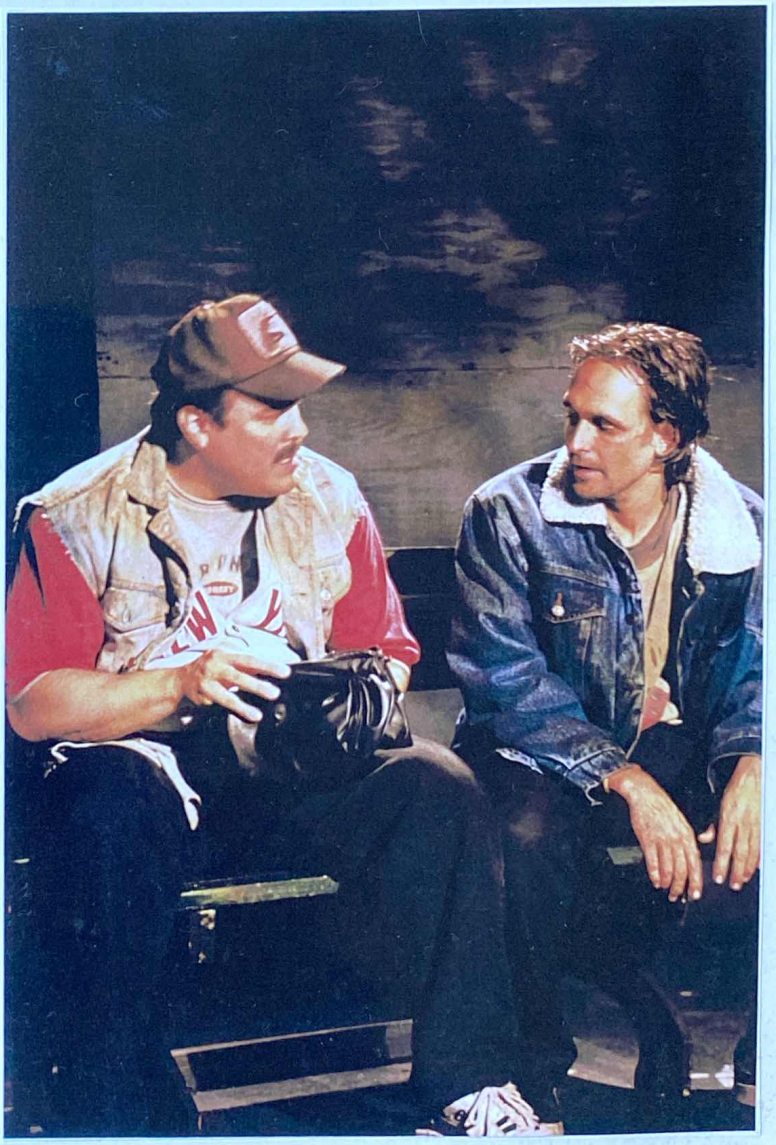
Trevor Long in *In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings.*

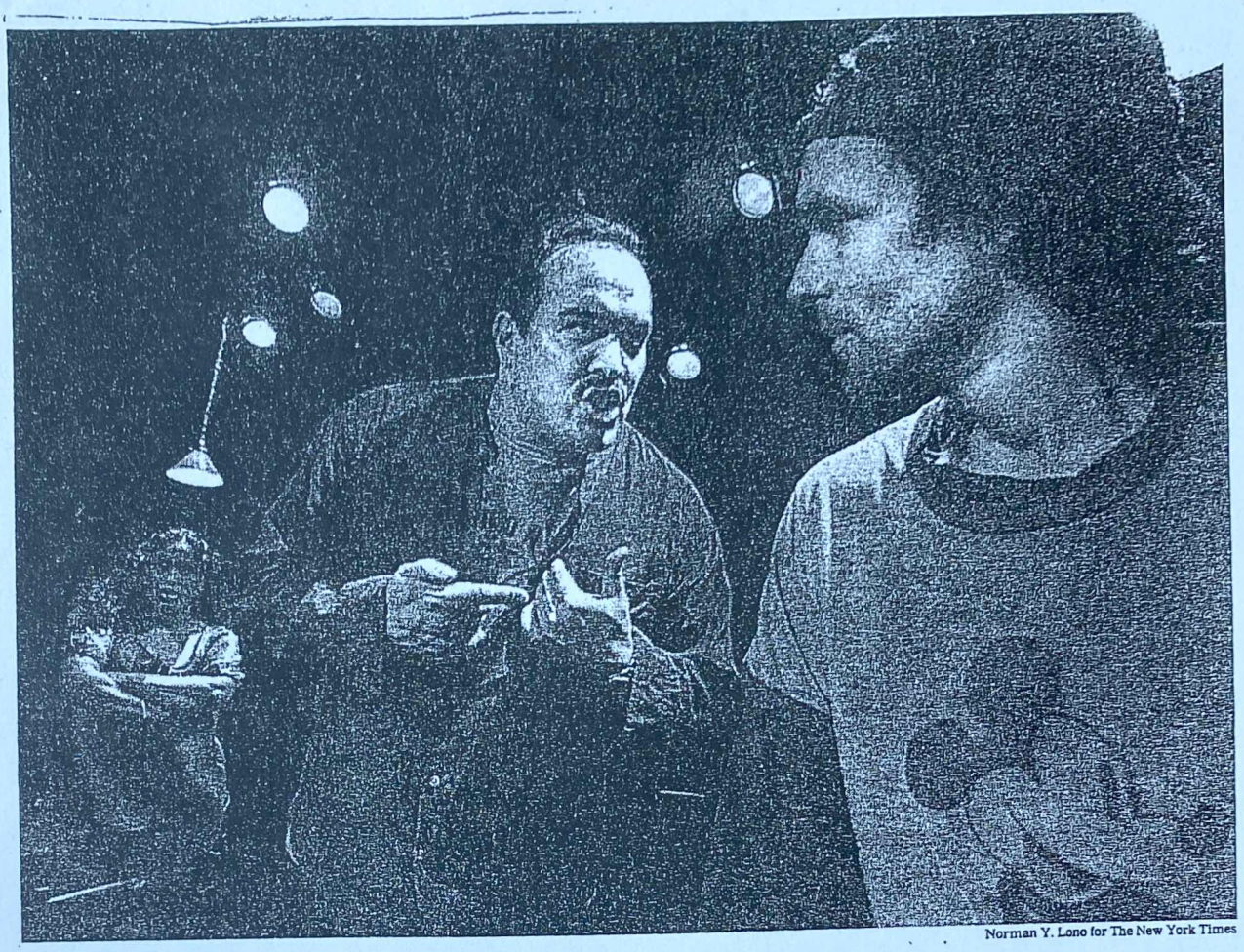
In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings is a magnificent achievement from the LAByrinth Theatre Company and Center Stage, NY for those seeking bold, visual theater — with or without the air-conditioning.

sound by Mr. DeArmon; composer, Daniel Harnett; sets by Max DeArmon; assistant director, Mr. Adly Guirgis. Presented by Labyrinth and Center Stage, N.Y. At 48 West 21st Street, fourth floor, Chelsea.









Norman Y. Lono for The New York Times

From left, Liza Zayas, David Zayas and Trevor Long in "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings," by Stephen Adly Guirgis, presented by the Labyrinth Theater Company and Center Stage, N.Y.

THEATER REVIEW

A Lot of Degradation and a Little Bit of Humor

By WILBORN HAMPTON

The desperation is anything but quiet in "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings," a harrowing new play by Stephen Adly Guirgis that is being given a menacing staging under Philip Seymour Hoffman's direction by the Labyrinth Theater Company.

As soon as the lights come up on the seedy bar that Mr. Adly Guirgis's misfits call home, Lenny, a week out of prison and very angry about life in general, snarls at anyone who crosses his line of vision and pulls a knife on a sniveling addict he calls Skank just for reaching for a bowl of peanuts.

The decibel level keeps rising as the emotional stakes get higher.

"In Arabia" is an old-fashioned slice-of-life play that takes place around Times Square before Walt Disney replaced Damon Runyon as resident folklorist, and it involves a collection of modern-day losers that even Runyon might find hard to stomach.

Zoot-suited craps players have been replaced by junkies in dirty T-shirts who will do anything for drug money, and the Salvation Army evangelists are now religious nuts who carve up the prostitutes rather than preach to them.

There is no romance in this Times Square. The happiest ever after one teen-age girl can imagine is for her, her friend and her boyfriend to end up together in the Betty Ford clinic.

Mr. Adly Guirgis spends the first half-hour introducing a lineup of characters one would be loath to meet offstage. But just when it seems the play will settle for the shock value of its raw and violent language and imagery — with some comic relief thrown in at the expense of the wasted lives it portrays — Mr. Adly Guirgis begins to tie all his loose ends together in a grim and sad portrait of life on the streets, almost an updated "Balm in Gilead" for the 1990's.

In addition to Lenny (David Zayas) and Skank (Trevor Long), there are Demaris (Ana Ortiz), a teen-ager who pulls a gun on her mother (Begonya Plaza); Chicky (Tiprin Mandalay), Skank's devoted girlfriend except when she needs crack money; Charlie (Sal Inzerillo), a kindhearted bartender, and Jake (Richard Petrocelli), the bar's owner.

And, in a gem of a performance by Mark Hammer, there is Sammy, an elderly alcoholic who can't hold a thought for more than 30 seconds and who provides cryptic commentary on life from a corner table.

Mr. Adly Guirgis pulls no punches and offers no sociological lessons about the failures of society. The degradation these characters endure to feed their habit — in one brutal scene Skank is humiliated by Greer (Russell G. Jones), a gay man slumming, as he negotiates sex for $20 — is only occasionally broken by humor.

One funny scene finds Demaris and Chicky trying unsuccessfully to hustle tricks on the street. "You've got to smile," Chicky advises Demaris, who keeps scaring off prospective customers.

"You've got to be like a party waiting to happen." When Demaris immediately frightens off another prospect, Chicky suggests, "You could do something else to get money, like rob."

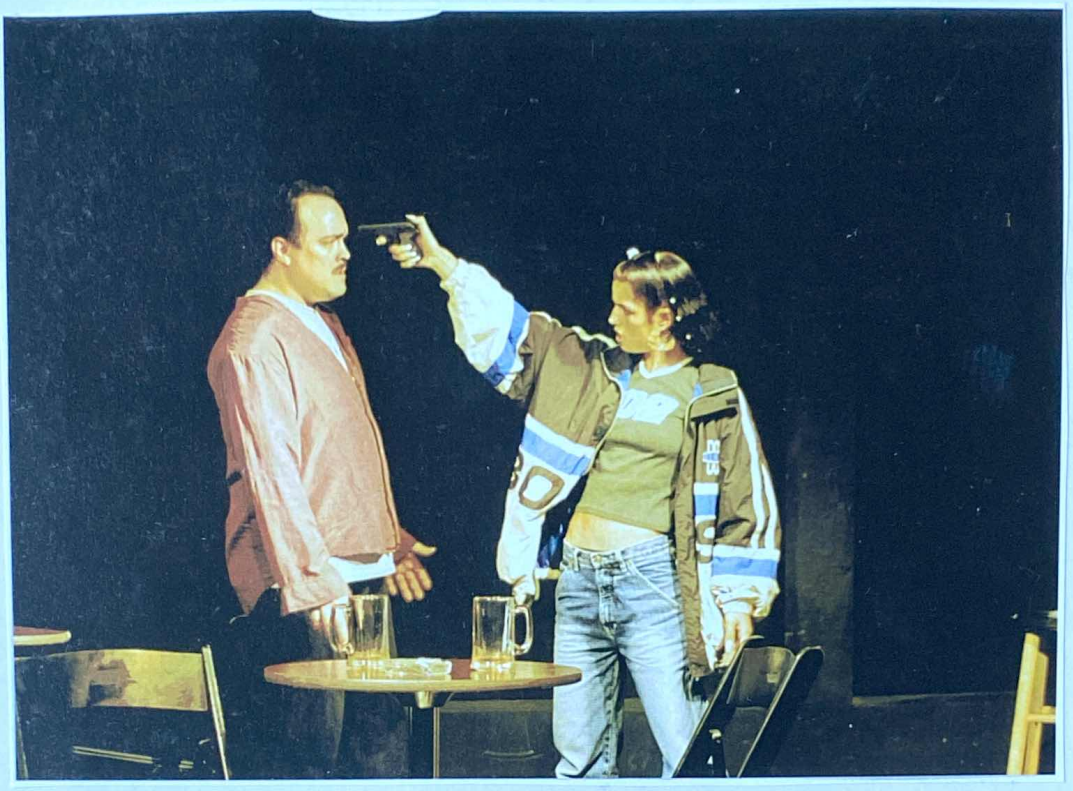
Mr. Hoffman, an actor making his directorial debut, has mounted a crisp and taut production and has molded his good cast into a strong ensemble that never seems to pause to catch its breath. Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Long are especially effective.

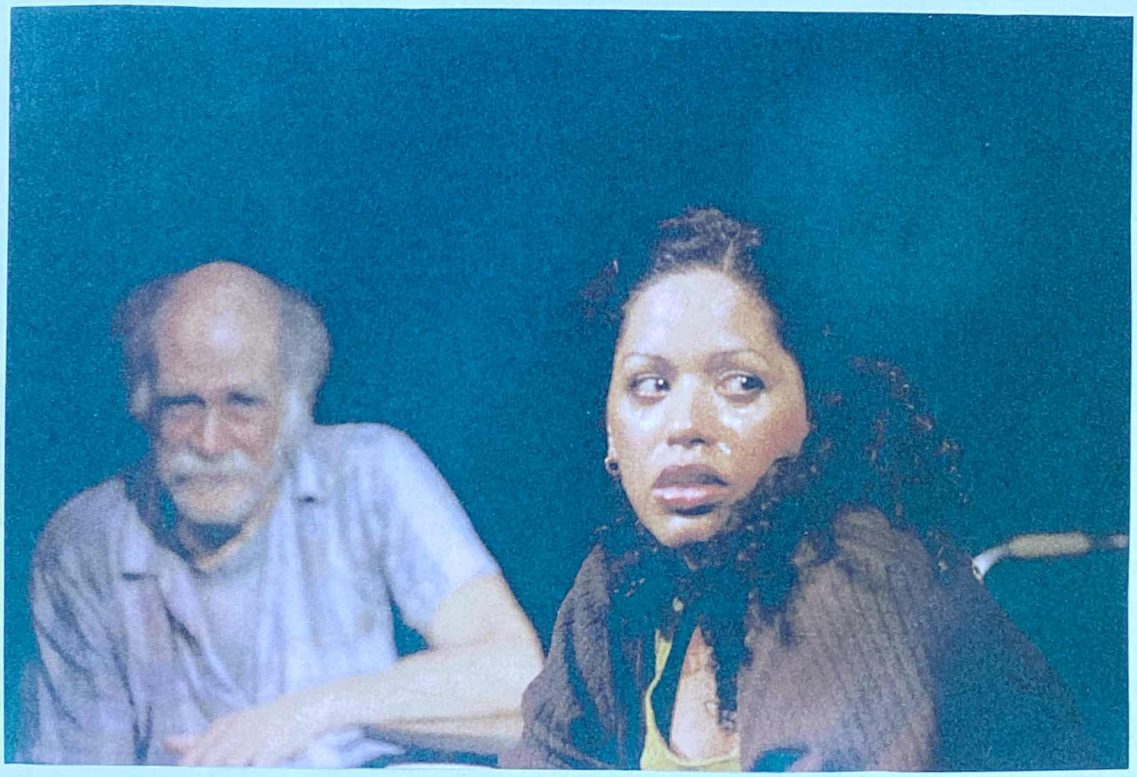
The outlook for the characters in "In Arabia" is bleak. In a scene in which Lenny applies for a job handing out fliers, the interviewer asks him, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" The line gets a laugh in performance. But as one leaves the theater, the question returns to haunt. If any of these characters is alive in five years, it will be a small miracle.

IN ARABIA, WE'D ALL BE KINGS

By Stephen Adly Guirgis; directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman; produced by Eric and Jill DeArmon and David Deblinger. Lighting by Sarah Sidman; costumes by Mimi O'Donnell; sound by Mr. DeArmon; composer, Daniel Harnett; sets by Max DeArmon; assistant director, Mr. Adly Guirgis. Presented by Labyrinth and Center Stage, N.Y. At 48 West 21st Street, fourth floor, Chelsea.

WITH: Russell G. Jones (Greer), Trevor Long (Skank), David Zayas (Lenny), Liza Zayas (Daisy), Ana Ortiz (Demaris), Tiprin Mandalay (Chicky), Sal Inzerillo (Charlie), Richard Petrocelli (Jake), Mark Hammer (Sammy), and Begonya Plaza (Mrs. Reyes).





BACKSTAGE®
The Performing Arts Weekly
July 16 - 22, 1999
Price: $2.75 (NY, NJ, CT, PA) $3.25 (Elsewhere)

On the technical side, "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is supported by an able group of theatre artists. **Max DeArmon** is responsible for the set design, and **Sarah Sidman** provides the shadowy lighting.

In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings

Reviewed by Elias Stimac

Presented by LAByrinth Theatre Company and Center Stage, NY, 48 W. 21st St., NYC, July 8-17.

"In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is a fascinating portrait of a group of New York City denizens who will do anything to survive. The world premiere of **Stephen Adly Guirgis**' drama is currently at Center Stage, NY, and has been given a high-caliber production by the LAByrinth Theatre Company.

Bars have always been a refuge for down-on-their-luck wanderers, and the rundown tavern in "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is no exception. As regulars and newcomers wander into the well-worn watering hole, emotions simmer and boil as friendships form and relationships shatter. Desperation is the drink of choice for these barflies, and while a ray of hope may occasionally pierce the darkness, it's not enough to save many of them from themselves or their fates.

Guirgis has filled his script with colorful characters and daring dialogue, making the modern milieu all the more convincing and compelling. The writer does not pull any punches in dramatizing life on the street, and the gamble pays off with both harsh and hilarious results. **Philip Seymour Hoffman** has directed the piece with equal amounts of humor, heart, and humanity and has instilled a level of dignity to this otherwise overlooked faction of society.

The talented cast members make a formidable ensemble, and include **Russell G. Jones**, **Trevor Long**, **David Zayas**, **Liza Zayas**, **Ana Ortiz**, **Tiprin Mandalay**, **Sal Inzerillo**, **Richard Petrocelli**, **Mark Hammer**, **Felix Solis**, **Chris McGerey**, and **Begonya Plaza**. Playwright, director, and actors combine to offer indelible insight into these shortsighted strangers who become a reluctant family of sorts.

On the technical side, "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings" is supported by an able group of theatre artists. **Max DeArmon** is responsible for the set design, and **Sarah Sidman** provides the shadowy lighting. Other top-notch technical support comes from costumer **Mimi O'Donnell**, sound designer **Eric DeArmon**, and composer **Daniel Harnett**.