



Roberta on the Arts

Two Plays by the Wallace Team at Midtown International Theatre Festival 2007

Midtown International Theatre Festival

Eighth Season

www.midtownfestival.org

Exec. Producer: John Chatterton

Assoc. Producer: Theater Resources Unlimited

Managing Director: Emileena Pedigo

Marketing Director: Bob Ost

Press: Judd Hollander/Cynthia Leathers

Festival Lighting Designer: Gustavo Araoz

Venue Manager, Where Eagles Dare: Sarah Bellin

Venue Manager, WorkShop Theatre: Jonathan Jackson

Venue Manager, WorkShop Theatre: Stephanie Ward

Box Office Managers: Jenny Greeman, Colleen Jasinski

July 16, 2007-August 5, 2007

Two Plays by the Wallace Team

Secrets Women Share

Dancing on the Moon Productions

([Secrets Production Website](#))

By Meri Wallace

Directed by Leah Bonvissuto

Press: Penny Landau/Maya PR

Featuring: Anne Ackerman, Sabrina Bogen, Allison Colby,

Maureen Griffin, Angus Hepburn, Annalisa Loeffler,

Torey Marks, Erin Leigh Schmoyer

And

The Shadow Pier

Howling Moon Cab Company

([Shadow Production Website](#))

By Jonathan Wallace

Directed by James Duff

Featuring: Jared Morgenstern, Paul Pryce,

Peter Reznikoff, Gayle Robbins

Dr. Roberta E. Zlokower

August 6, 2007

Meri Wallace has written *Secrets Women Share*, and her husband, Jonathan Wallace, has written *The Shadow-Pier*. Both have actors portraying multiple characters, but Ms. Wallace's work uses different vignettes with different sets and props. Mr. Wallace's "film noir" within a play within a "film noir" is less explicit about character changes, with a change of sweater or accent as the delineation of time and scene. Both plays have surprise endings and more surprises throughout.

In Ms. Wallace's *Secrets Women Share*, youthful and middle-aged women alike bond in similar fashion, by telling each other secrets, whether in the ladies room, at a spa, at a radiology office, or on top of a stalled roller-coaster. As it happens, the first vignette was the weakest and the last was the strongest. For some reason, in several of the MITF plays this season, there was an inherent loudness or shrillness written into some of the scenes. The roller-coaster scenario opened with shrill screams, which were unnerving and unnecessary. Fear can be expressed in less jarring ways. This early scene could be tightened to bring the play to seamless strength. The mammogram scene was next and it was both poignant and riveting. The unseen man that gave commonality to the women seemed almost onstage. In fact, the audience seemed almost onstage, as the unfolding scenes were so true to female nature.

The apartment in Brooklyn vignette revolved around the needs and sensitivities of a child, and Torey Marks is a young actor to watch. My favorite vignette was "Marta's Spa", with Erin Leigh Schmoyer as Marta, a Russian masseuse, who keeps track of her ladies' lives, going around the circle of clients, massaging their limbs and learning about their men. As one client complains about her "inactive" husband, another realizes to whom her "very active" lover is married. The revelation is expected, but the process toward revelation is the reward. With a bit of work, *Secrets Women Share* should be on its way to an Off-Broadway home. The actors are all persuasive and talented. In addition to Ms. Marks and Ms. Schmoyer, Maureen Griffin, Anne Ackerman, Sabrina Bogen, Allison Colby, Angus Hepburn, and Annalisa Loeffler were all well chosen for this delightful and insightful production.



Annalisa Loeffler and Maureen Griffin



Annalisa Loeffler, Erin Leigh Schmoyer and Anne Ackerman

Photos courtesy of James Kriegsmann

The Shadow-Pier is a potentially worthy but currently confusing play. Jonathan Wallace has the four actors portray three characters each in three plots, each more “sub-plot” than the next. The actors seemed a bit confused too, as one dropped a picnic box, revealing its emptiness, and one went off-accent, to return to the original linguistic intention, having tossed my train of thought. With no set changes, no light or sound effect shifts, it was extremely difficult to grasp whether we were in the fifty years ago or present setting. “The Shadow-Pier” was a one-screening film, taken by the FBI for consideration of its Communist intentions. The characters portray the filmmaker, an FBI agent, the filmmaker’s sister, a film professor, a Holocaust survivor, lovers, mob boss, with meetings in the dark, meetings in the light, and meetings by phone.

There are gunshots, kisses, liquor, and doors opening and closing. Press at this production, and only this production, were given a copy of the entire play. But, reading the play revealed little more of the playwright’s nuanced intentions nor the delineation of roles. I would suggest filming the real “film noir” plot in advance, with the same actors, cutting to a dim screen for the scenes of that woven drama. I would suggest a divided stage for the two remaining plots with stronger accent shifts and more obvious costume props. With work, *The Shadow-Pier* could meet its potential. Jared Morgenstern, Paul Pryce, Peter Reznikoff, and Gayle Robbins all managed this challenging script with confidence and presence.



Peter Reznikoff (AEA) and Gayle Robbins in *The Shadow-Pier*
Photo courtesy of Ellis Gaskell