

“Ethan McSweeney seems to have a Midas touch. It’s not that the plays he directs turn into gold but they do sail across the footlights with a vibrant, magnetic sheen... The wunderkind director who made his Broadway debut before some directors finish graduate school, is earning plaudits for a flurry of new productions...**Throughout his career, McSweeney has moved from classics to contemporary dramas to premieres with ease...His scrupulous attention to the melding of design, pacing, and performance and facility with which he presents them, feels crisp, vibrant, and cinematic.”**

Jaime Kleiman, *American Theatre*

“McSweeney is revealing himself to be the kind of directorial prodigy we read about in biographies of such auteurs as Robert Wilson and Peter Sellers. Except that he does not impose a vision or conceit on a play; he amplifies themes in the work.”

Rohan Preston, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“McSweeney is not only one of our most successful theatre directors, but equally one of our most important, and for a man who zoomed a few years ago past 40, he continues to sport the aura of a modern Boy Wonder — an Orson Welles with much more in his future than commercials for Paul Masson ... It’s not just that he is — as Peter Marks characterized him in his Washington Post review of *The Tempest* — a “classical imagist,” although he does possess that rare mixture of deep affinity for text and a fanciful eye. **He has proven to be fluid in his choices, negotiating between the classical and the edgy-new.** For every classic, in other words, he can stage an edgy (Kate Fodor’s *100 Saints You Should Know*), or something highly edgy (Jason Grote’s *1001*), or else versions of plays so edgy they’re standing almost on a ledge (Noah Haidle’s *Mr. Marmalade*).”

The Clyde Fitch Report

“McSweeney...has pursued such an eclectic career as a director that he himself is hard to figure out...Creating his own path seems characteristic of the man. “I don’t tend to do well with well-trod systems,” he agrees...McSweeney has maintained a peripatetic and inquisitive career... [which] seems to illustrate the creative potential of being unsettled...**he can always be an outside eye.”**

Peter Crawley, *The Irish Times*

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THE FATHER

by Florian Zeller, trans by Christopher Hampton

The Gate Theatre • September – October 2016

Sets: Francis O’Connor • Costumes: Joan O’Clery • Lights: Rick Fisher • Sound: Denis Clohessy
Irish Times Award Nominations for Best Production, Best Set Design, & Best Leading Actor

“★★★★ ... Fluently understood and enhanced by director Ethan McSweeney ... here scenes don’t flow, they fracture, distend, or repeat ... the chronology and setting is uncertain and Francis O’Connor’s excellent set – a bright and claustrophobic emulation of chic minimalism – offers few clues apart from a neat chandelier of twisting metal that delicately evokes retreating neural pathways. In Roe’s beautifully pitched performance, he finds heartbreaking comedy

in a man desperately improvising to cover the cracks ... In this empathetic and slippery production as his confusion grows, so does ours ... Zeller's approach ... is hardly sentimental. If dementia follows a theatrical form, he suggests, its tragicomedy."

Peter Crawley, *The Irish Times*

"NOT TO BE MISSED ... A powerful production that takes the audience on an emotional roller coaster ... Owen Roe is the undisputed star of the show, delivering a superb performance in the leading role ... his nuanced portrayal of Andre's struggle to hang on to the man he once was produces moments of smart humor and heartbreaking sadness."

The Irish Mirror

"★★★★ ... A masterful examination of growing old with dementia ... as scenes unfold the time frame seems confusing and repetitious until you realize that you are seeing the world through Andre's eyes...this is a huge role and it is another triumph for Owen Roe ... the splendid supporting cast is led by a brilliantly contrasted Fiona Bell and the set, a vast space with little definition, is itself like the world seen through they eyes of dementia."

Michael Moffat, *Irish Mail on Sunday*

"★★★★★... An extraordinary production of an extraordinary play. Superb and unmissable!"

The Arts Review

"Theatrical brilliance ... like the Father, the audience members cannot trust their own version of events. The audio design by Denis Clohessy sets the teeth on edge. Owen Roe is a treat to watch [as a] great actor commands the stage."

Katy Hayes, *The Irish Independent*

"★★★★ ... One of the high points of this year's Dublin Theatre Festival ... Under Ethan McSweeney's direction the scenes flare and disappear like images on a TV screen ... Francis O'Connor's masterful set crystallizes the emptying out of Andre's mind while Rick Fisher's fluorescent bright lights achieve an effect that is the opposite of illuminating: as each scene starts the audiences, like Andre, has almost no idea where they are ... Owen Roe bring a King Lear-like majesty to the role [of a] patriarch whose hold on life as as sanity is slipping."

Sara Keating, *Sunday Business Post*

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MOMENT

by Deidre Kinahan

The Studio Theater • March – May 2016

Sets: Debora Booth • Costumes: Philip Whitcomb • Lights: Scott Bolman • Sound: Palmer Hefferen

"The acting in Deirdre Kinahan's *Moment* at Studio Theatre is so sharp it's like seeing a play in a live equivalent of high-def ... Director Ethan McSweeney, better known in Washington for his bigger shows with the Shakespeare Theatre Company, handles "Moment" with a delicate touch in Studio's coziest venue, the Milton Theatre. The result is acting that never hits a wrong note and is as absorbingly detailed as [the] humble and functional-looking kitchen set ... The evening's heat comes from Emily Landham's resentment as Niamh,

who works in a local publishing house and enters with a hopeful beau named Fin trailing her (a wonky and solicitous Avery Clark). As Ruth, Hannah Yelland is superb as the outsider trying to charm her way in, and she and Albrink — who creates a nuanced portrait of a damaged man trying to move on — have a lovely fragile rapport. Caroline Bootle Pendergast and Ciaran Byrne supply spirited turns as the good-time couple Ciara (sister of Niamh and Nial) and her husband, the simple-spirited Dave ... **The most profound instance of vanishing inside a character is Dearbhla Molloy’s utterly natural performance as Teresa, the addled matriarch of the clan.** There is nothing flashy about Teresa, yet Molloy is subtly, authoritatively gripping. The believability is absolute as this long-suffering mother waves away attention yet fusses to keep her almost disintegrated family together just for an afternoon.

Nelson Pressley, *The Washington Post*

“One of the strongest theatrical experiences I’ve had this season ... in his Studio Theatre debut, Ethan McSweeney (best known to Washington audiences for his work at Shakespeare Theatre Company) directs a group of uniformly talented actors who give life to the story in a way that allows the underlying tension build slowly, but deliberately and realistically ... This is a production that will stay with you long after the performance ends.”

Jennifer Perry, *Broadway World*

“A master class in complicated characterization ... what follows is an examination of the tricky nature of memory, the long-term effects of tragedy, and the complicated notion of being a family.

Jessica Pearson, *DC Theatre Scene*

“At the explosive end of Moment’s first act ... Studio Theatre’s penetrating production of Deirdre Kinahan’s lacerating *Moment* – a knife-edged night of reopened old wounds – the audience I watched the play with sat a long moment in shell-shocked silence. I doubt any of us knew what hit us ... To say this family drama is fascinating is an understatement!”

John Stoltenberg, *DC Metro Theatre Arts*

“Irish playwright Deirdre Kinahan’s *Moment* offers us, without hyperbole or melodrama, the family forever marked by the wound of anger and hostility; and as those wounds open in the play so they open across our violent landscape ... Intimate, funny, and insightful, *Moment* takes us into the psychological terrain, not of the perpetrator nor the victim of that aggression, but of the familial bystanders who, though invisible, nonetheless suffer lifelong consequences ... Ethan McSweeney directed *Moment*, finding within it an exquisitely natural pacing, punctuated by sharp, clarifying “moments”.

Robert Michael Oliver, *DCMTA*

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FULFILLMENT

by Thomas Bradshaw

The Flea Theatre/American Theatre Company co-world premiere • September – December 2015

Sets & Lights: Brian Sidney Bembridge • Costumes: Andrea Lauer • Sound: Mikhail Fikshel and Miles Polaski

“Engaging and Unsettling ... it provides a sharply legible index to the mind and method of an original playwright who refuses to embrace easy or consoling answers to the puzzles called human beings.”

Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*

“An urban dramedy slathered in Bradshaw sauce, *Fulfillment* gets a handsome and swift-moving production from Ethan McSweeney ... the cast is likable and very game, with Flood and Akinnagbe showing genuine chemistry (and heat) and Jeff Biehl coolly creepy as the neighbor from hell.”

David Cote, *TimeOut*

"A thought-provoking and powerful evening at the theater ... With direction by Ethan McSweeney, Thomas Bradshaw's world premiere play *Fulfillment*, examines the theme of agency and the quest to live a "successful" life. This compelling construct makes for an intense, often uncomfortable, and extremely provocative 90 minutes on the stage.

Rachel Weinberg, *Broadway World*

“In Thomas Bradshaw's acerbic new play *Fulfillment* — now at the Flea in a crisp production by Ethan McSweeney — a successful lawyer struggles to find inner peace and external rewards ... Bradshaw's modern-day Job story illustrates the covert racism endemic in elite circles.”

Jacob Gallagher-Ross, *The Village Voice*

“Playwright Thomas Bradshaw is an equal opportunity misanthrope with a tabloid mentality. In one way or another his principal subjects are race and morality (or immorality) in America ... Not surprisingly, the play’s best scene finds a couple in ferocious fornication (“choreographed” by Yehuda Duenyas – talk about a “specialty”), only to be hilariously undone by a psychopathic neighbor’s purposeful and continual attempts to torment his new African American neighbor with a barrage of industrial strength noise. **Mikhail Fiskel’s musical scoring, and his sound design collaboration with Miles Polaski, could not be more inspired.”**

Hedy Weiss, *Chicago Sun-Times*

“An excellent play by one of America's most audacious scribes ... the latest in Bradshaw's highly provocative series of dramas about the perils of intimacy; the complexity of being an African-American in the allegedly modern, allegedly enlightened world; and the ubiquity of self-loathing, loneliness and desperation among affluent, amply educated urban professionals ... **McSweeney's production is dynamic, visually imaginative and never dull for so much as a second ... and it does have its moments of enlightenment (Mikhail Fiskel and Miles Polaski's sound design is a sensual feast). Go see it by all means — it is a most stimulating new play.”**

Chris Jones, *Chicago Tribune*

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A TIME TO KILL

Golden Theatre, Broadway • September – November 2013

Produced by Daryl Roth & Eva Price

By John Grisham • adapt by Rupert Holmes • Sets: James Noone • Costumes: David Woolard •
Lights: Jeff Croiter • Sound: Lindsay Jones • Video: Jeff Sugg

“A sturdy ensemble production helmed by Ethan McSweeney, this courtroom drama feels as if it were made for an earlier, less cynical era ... James Noone’s expressive set, made almost entirely of polished wood and sensuously curved like the staves of a barrel, has the mellow glow (provided by lighting designer Jeff Croiter) you’d expect to find in an old country courthouse in the Deep South ... McSweeney and his first-rate design team have gone for a

timeless quality — no doubt to suggest that racism, in one ugly form or another, is always with us....**If that sounds exactly like the irrational fury that makes Tea Party extremists resist anything and everything proposed by a black president ... well, so it is.**”

Marilyn Stasio, *Variety*

“**A thriller of the sort rarely seen on Broadway these days**, John Grisham’s *A Time to Kill* brings a satisfying, if unsettling, courtroom drama to the Golden Theatre with an engaging cast playing juicy dramatic characters in a lurid tale spiked with a mild frisson of sex.”

Jeremy Gerard, *Bloomberg.com*

“**McSweeney keeps the plot wheels turning**... aided by the versatility of Noone’s elegant design and **Jeff Croiter’s** textured lighting, lending a cinematic fluidity to the scene transitions.”

David Rooney, *Hollywood Reporter*

“**The focus is squarely on the courtroom, which director Ethan McSweeney and scenic designer James Noone have accommodated with a turntable set that pulls us into the action**

... We watch the defendant, Carl Lee Hailey, as a jury would; and since he is played by the magnificent John Douglas Thomson — who delivers the most fully realized performance here — we are moved by his anguish, rage, obstinance and dignity ... [Patrick Page] wraps himself in Southern smarm, wielding an oily smile and lowering his voice to a fiendish basso croak ... a droll **Tom Skerritt** pops up as Jake's booze-addled mentor, while *Law & Order* alum and real-life counselor **Fred Dalton Thompson** has a drily engaging turn as a no-nonsense judge. The wonderful **Tonya Pinkins** and **Chike Johnson** bring as much as humanity as possible to the roles of, respectively, Carl Lee's devastated wife and a black sheriff whose function is to embody reason and decency ... **the crowd-pleasing *A Time to Kill* is more than justly served.**

Elysa Gardner *USA today*

“**[John Douglas] Thompson lends a palpable weight and gravity to his performance as Carl Lee, whose belief that his actions were justified makes him squirm with anguish at the idea that he’ll hang for his crimes ... Mr. Holmes ... infuses the play with crisp humor ...** Much of it concerns the antics of Lucien Wilbanks, the disbarred lawyer who is a mentor to Jake, and who is played with appealingly laid-back good spirits by Tom Skerritt, nimbly engaging in a little actorly petty thievery. Lucien’s horror at discovering he’s taken a big gulp of iced tea, when he thought it was whiskey, earns one of the evening’s most robust laughs.”

Charles Isherwood, *The New York Times*

“the atmosphere in director Ethan McSweeney’s crisp, polished production is **consistently electric.**”

Paul Burchall, *Stage and Cinema*

“**Perfectly cast** ... [Tom] Skerritt nicely pulls off a charming disgraced and drunken lawyer and [Fred Dalton] Thompson is a sure-footed judge”

Mark Kennedy, *Associated Press*

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Rx

by Kate Fodor

Primary Stages • January – March 2012

Sets: Lee Savage • Costumes: Andrea Lauer • Lights: Matthew Richards • Sound: Lindsay Jones

"A sprightly, engaging comedy by Kate Fodor ... A winning combination of light satire and romance, the play pokes gentle fun at our overprescribed culture ... "Rx" evenly balances its satirical thrusts at Big Pharma and its depiction of the ups and downs of the little people looking to it for daily relief ... **Marin Hinkle** gives a winsome performance. **Elizabeth Rich** plays Phil's rapacious boss, Allison, with hilarious verve. The wonderful actress **Marylouise Burke**, an expert at creating appealingly unsentimental portraits of dotty older women, provides wry comic relief. **Under the crisply paced direction of Ethan McSweeney, "Rx" zips along the curves of its plot with brisk conviction. A smart, sweet play."**

Charles Isherwood, *The New York Times*

"A prescription for laughter ... watching Kate Fodor's sharp, tenderly sardonic new comedy, *Rx*, I kept thinking of Ernst Lubitsch. Aficionados of the great German American filmmaker's masterpieces, with their enchanting mixture of sweetness and sting, will know what I mean when I say that they might describe Fodor's charming play as *The Clinical Trial Around the Corner* ... [Fodor turns] a classic boy-meets-girl romantic structure into a thornily funny image of today's screwed-up world. **She's got the extra advantage, too, of a smart, precise, zestily dry production by Ethan McSweeney: every lunacy in its place, neatly labeled, and irresistible ...** McSweeney's production moves at a rollicking clip while still allowing his actors full time for tenderness. As a result of this neat balancing act, Fodor's silly, hapless, misguided characters start to become dear to us. We laugh at them as an index of the contemporary world's foolishness while still loving them as people."

Michael Feingold, *The Village Voice*

"Ideal entertainment for neurotic people living in anxious times. Kate Fodor's comic tone is well-balanced. **Directors and designers rarely receive kudos for their sense of proportion. But it's worth noting how comfortably this production, helmed by Ethan McSweeney fits both the scope of the play and the stage dimensions of its 198-seat off-Broadway house.** (Something to keep in mind for future productions.) ... Lee Savage's compact set makes the case. Clad in shades of grey, the Chinese-box design of a generic office interior is cleverly outfitted with camouflaged doors, drawers, cupboards, and drop-downs. **Frequent scene changes are not only efficiently executed, they're also fun to watch.** Fodor has a way with flawed characters, and her lovers here are so warmly drawn that we feel we have a stake in their fate. Scribe's comic tone is well-balanced — light enough to rescue Meena and Phil from their own demons, but sharp enough to stick it to a pharmaceutical industry that makes its billions by convincing people that being human is a disease."

Marilyn, Stasio, *Variety*

"A fast-acting short-term mood-brightener. The show works like a multi-symptom med: As it sends up our cultural obsession with pills to cure everything (plop, plop), it skewers self-serving drug companies (fizz, fizz). **The acting by the ensemble and direction by Ethan McSweeney are fleet-footed."**

Joe Dziemianowicz, *Daily News*

"A stylish, clever satire of drug companies ... A snappy new comedy by Kate Fodor. A good dose of intelligent fun. Presented by Primary Stages, the fast and witty 100-minute production is smoothly directed by Ethan McSweeney ... a stylish, clever satire of drug trials, medical marketing tricks, and our over-dependence on pills to solve problems. Elizabeth Rich gives a ferociously funny performance. Paul Niebanck brings slapstick charm to his portrayal of Ed"

“Kate Fodor's piercing new comedy ‘Rx’ contains equally strong dosages of satire and insight. Fodor strikingly portrays our overmedicated society. A solid cast and keen direction from Ethan McSweeney perfectly balance the wickedly funny social barbs with compassionate portraiture. The show is an effective prescription from Primary Stages for an anemic theater season. The resourceful Marin Hinkle and Stephen Kunken paint a paletteful of subtle shades when depicting the unlikely lovers. Hinkle finds the heartbreaking humor. Kunken is goofily endearing. Elizabeth Rich is voraciously sharp-toothed. The reliable Marylouise Burke hits Frances from an unexpected angle, finding joy in this lonely lady's discoveries. Paul Niebanck pulls double duty, making the most of his scene as the alternatively hyper and melancholy Richard and endowing the foggy-minded Ed with an adorable shaggy-dog quality. Michael Bakkensen as Meena's insensitive superior handles it with aplomb.”

David Sheward, *Backstage*

"Part satire and part romantic comedy -- is brought to life by a strong cast under the direction of Ethan McSweeney. Hinkle strikes just the right note ... both funny and heartfelt. Kunken has a wry, understated manner ... but also provides an enormous depth of emotion that roils just under the surface. Marylouise Burke does an outstanding job. Elizabeth Rich impresses. Paul Niebanck is effective in two rather different roles. Set designer Lee Savage has fun with the visualization of certain scenes -- particularly the locale where Meena and Frances first meet. Lindsay Jones' original music/sound design is also particularly spot-on whenever the change to this particular environment occurs.”

Dan Bacalzo, *Theatremania*

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TALES FROM HOLLYWOOD

by Christopher Hampton

The Guthrie Theatre • September – November 2012

Sets: Lee Savage • Costumes: Andrea Lauer • Lights: Robert Wierzel • Sound: Robert Kaplowitz
• Video: Jason Thompson

“The Guthrie’s 50th season opens with a winner! Tales from Hollywood is a rock-solid experience, buoyed by a talented cast and driven by a handsome production aesthetic that does a magnificent job of using the Wurtele Thrust space and the Guthrie’s technical capabilities. It’s a solid kickoff for the theater’s Christopher Hampton celebration”

Ed Huyck, *City Pages*

"The production is staged fluidly by Ethan McSweeney, who has directed some daringly affecting shows at the Guthrie, including John Guare's ‘Six Degrees of Separation’ and Arthur Miller's ‘A View from the Bridge.’ ... Here he and projection designer Jason H. Thompson use cinematic elements -- even a Foley-style sound-effects person -- to make this talky, occasionally static work more engaging and intimate. The live projections of the actors augment the performers without stealing attention from them ... Leading a first-rate cast, charismatic Lee Sellars invests Ödön with inviting wit and warmth. He is a study in versatility, popping effortlessly in and out of accents and scenes."

Rohan Preston, *Star Tribune*

“Kicking off its 50th season [is] Christopher Hampton's *Tales from Hollywood*, a dizzyingly dark and absurdist comedy of the lives and work of Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich and Thomas

Mann, and their émigré (or more appropriately-exiled) novelists and screen-writers. **Fascism, capitalism and the role of the writer are at odds as director, Ethan McSweeney, cleverly weaves historical insight into this 'film within a play' staging style, taking audiences on a whirlwind of philosophical discourse and witty banter ...** All the while, the cast is silently filmed with their images and dialogue projected on the screen in black and white, creating an 'Old Hollywood' feel and intimately involving the audience in the lives and experiences of the characters. **While the screen would seem to distract from the stage, quite the opposite occurs. Character emotions appear amplified, and the subtle cues in facial expressions make the unspoken, at times, more powerful than the dialogue."**

BroadwayWorld.com

"If the rest of the season proves to be as intellect-tickling and toothsome as this first offering ... this golden anniversary promises to be a strong one."

Dominic Papatola, *Pioneer Press*

"Thought-provoking and layered ... **Much kudos must be paid to the behind-the-scenes team and director Ethan McSweeney ... throughout the entire performance, a visible camera crew captures video of the actors which plays live behind the cast on giant screens.** The scene is precisely how one would imagine a 1940s movie set to feel, and the ambiance adds a crucial extra element of depth and tone to the production."

Ellen Burkhardt, *Minnesota Monthly*

"**Very cool.** The idea of Bertolt Brecht trying to scratch out a living writing Hollywood movie scripts is a golden sit-com premise all its own, and Hampton knows a good comic set-up when he sees one ... not that *Tales from Hollywood* is particularly high-brow; in fact, it goes high and low in equal measure, offering up something for everyone ... **Throughout the play, video cameras project the action onstage on the back wall in black-and-white, making it look like art instantaneously imitating life; one as a reflection of the other."**

MSP Magazine

"**Under Ethan McSweeney's direction and Lee Savage's stunning design the entire set is a ballad to one of America's most dynamic and influential institutions: 1930's Hollywood. Individual scenes are shot onstage and screened on a prodigious screen, blurring the lines between personal dramas and cinematic productions, between artists and industry, between theater and film ...** The dialogue is poignant where it captures the tension between the émigrés' appreciation of the fortuitous circumstances that granted them refuge in this country, and their frustration at their exploitation by the film industry ... it is the tragic lot of Heinrich Mann and his wife Nelly – played movingly by **Keir Dullea** and **Allison Daugherty** – that draws the playwright's compassion ... **Perhaps this production is best in its orchestration of the subdued subtleties of the script:** of the untold calamities that displaced the writers from their homes, the belittlement they endured from publishers and producers, and the portending practices of Congress toward their suspect Communist engagement. On rare occasions does the pain unravel forcefully, but it is throbbing all along the production."

Mira Reinberg, *Aisle Say*

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THE TRINITY RIVER PLAYS

by Regina Taylor

Goodman Theatre/Dallas Theatre Center • October 2010 – February 2011

Sets: Todd Rosenthal • Costumes: Karen Perry • Lights: Tyler Micoleau • Sound: Steven Cahill •
Music: Daryl Waters

“The Trinity River Plays are like the garden in which much of their action is set – sprawling, florid, earthy and abundantly alive ... A great deal of the credit for the show's entertaining surface must go to director Ethan McSweeney, his design team and his cast ... All four women are beyond praise. Aldridge pushes things right to the brink of too much, but never quite goes overboard. Jerald reveals a hidden warmth under her austerity. Williams and Clark are simply perfect.”

Lawson Taite, *Dallas Morning News*

“Brilliantly written, directed and performed ... a must see. It possesses the perfect balance of humanity, humor, superb acting and gut wrenching dramatic scenes seamlessly flowing into each other. **Taylor and director Ethan McSweeney deftly take her characters on a journey through some of life's darkest moments, while allowing emotionally satisfying transformations.** It is a touching portrait of growing up, motherhood and family relationships...about going home to move forward.”

Marilee Vergati, *Dallas Examiner*

“The kind of show that gets the attention of the Pulitzer committee. Brilliant American playwright: check. Regional authenticity: check. Drama of significance: check, check. The trilogy is still in development, but it's likely headed for the promised land ... its director, Ethan McSweeney, has staged more than 60 productions around the country, and made his Broadway debut in 2000 with the revival of Gore Vidal's *The Best Man*. In other words, he's the kind of experienced guy producers and playwrights love... **So it's not a shock that the acting in *The Trinity River Plays* is stellar [and] the staging is inspired.”**

Christine Allison, *D Magazine*

“Director and Broadway veteran Ethan McSweeney deftly navigates the production, balancing the many impressive talents to create a symbiotic whole ... In particular, the scenic design, by Tony Award-winner Todd Rosenthal, is deceptively simple as the audience looks in on Rose's home, via a cross-section of the interior, through the backyard. The rain effect on stage is impressive, but the overall use of space is just as exceptional.”

Kris Noteboom, *TheatreJones*

“Exceptionally well cast and extremely well acted ... From teenage French kissing lessons to the aftermath of sexual indiscretion, and with *Soul Train* dance moves alongside unrequited love and bitter grief, **the world premiere of Regina Taylor's new trilogy is a soul piercing account of one woman's struggle to come to terms with her past as it continues to affect her future.”**

The Flash List.com

“With *The Trinity River Plays*, Golden Globe-winning actress and playwright Regina Taylor has planted poetic seeds in fertile ground. Namely, the Dallas Theater Center, where the trilogy of one-act plays is having its world premiere ... **Director Ethan McSweeney's cast members, notably Clark, give powerhouse performances,** and Todd Rosenthal's sprawling set of the prairie-style home and the back yard is **among the best work on a local stage in ages.”**

Mark Lowry, DFW.com

“The Trinity River Plays are a must see! [It] goes back to the fundamentals of writing a solid

story ... the one thing that separates the average play from the phenomenal one. In the new trilogy from TV, Film and theater star Regina Taylor we get a healthy dose of emotion, and depth of character. Regina writes what people breathe; joy, suffering, pain, and gladness. She touches you through her characters and at times transports you back to a time in your life when you experienced something life changing. It might be a quick moment or conscious flash, but you feel it.”

Neighborsgo.com

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IN THIS CORNER

by Steven Drukman

The Old Globe Theatre • January 2008

Sets: Lee Savage • Lights: Tyler Micoleau • Costumes: Tracy Christensen • Sound: Lindsay Jones
Winner of San Diego Critics Circle Award for Best New Play

“The production, **kinetically directed by Ethan McSweeney**, keeps the intellectual bob-and-weave lively. A prizefight atmosphere dominates even when the only thing happening is an expository swirl of reporters, managers, announcers and trainers...Drukman treats the slangy speech of each character as though it were part of a hip-hop poetry slam. McSweeney ingeniously converts the old-school word-spinning into modern-day theatrical rhythm. **McSweeney's direction finds the energetic soul of Drukman's drama.**”

Charles McNulty, *Los Angeles Times*

“...as sheer entertainment Ethan McSweeney's colorful Old Globe world preem wins a decision on points.”

Bob Verini, *Variety*

“There's plenty to admire in this production. Director Ethan McSweeney alternates between breathless speed with rat-a-tat delivery (think "His Girl Friday" as a boxing movie) and scenes of quiet revelation. “

Paul Hodgins, *Orange County Register*

“Stephen Drukman’s “In This Corner,” **in a superb world premiere** on The Old Globe’s ring-size Cassius Carter stage, lets two legendary heavyweight boxers from the 1930s battle for personal dignity against the profit-and-propaganda process that turns people into products. **In director Ethan McSweeney’s gritty staging, ‘Corner’ drapes its message loosely over these real-life champs, allowing us to learn about the men beneath the mantles as we gain empathy for 'products' then and now, in sports and beyond, whose extended “entourages” aren’t so much in their corners as in their pockets ...** In the 1930s, radio added play-by-play sports coverage to its media arsenal. Families across the country now listened in unison to events like presidential addresses and heavyweight fights. **And, in respect of that powerful presence, McSweeney stops the action to stage the 1938 fight merely through the power of words spoken first from the original broadcast, then picked up by Smith’s oracular ringside voice. The heightened language of the announcer, the sportscaster and the newspaper columnist give the show its bitter flavor, like a rum-soaked stogy...** McSweeney and designers Lee Savage and Tracy Christensen go for the total realism of a boxing ring, turning the audience into spectators, with “off-stage” actors “ringside” as much as possible. The “you are there” sensation begins during pre-show with John Keabler’s sweaty workout as “the boxer.” This detail accentuates the underlying metaphor of life in the ring.”

“A raised boxing ring is a directorial challenge, with ring ropes obscuring the sightlines and the difficulty actors face getting in and out of the ring, but **director Ethan McSweeney rises to the challenge**. He moves the play all around the theater, creates a snarky, cynical edge to the story and lightens and brightens the dialogue with rat-a-tat, screwball line delivery in New Yawk-ese.”
Pam Kragen, *North County Times*

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1001

by Jason Grote

p. 73 Productions • November 2007

Sets: Rachel Hauck • Lights: Tyler Micoleau • Costumes: Murrell Horton • Sound: Lindsay Jones
Ten Best of 2007, TimeOut New York Magazine

“**People and their passions fly off the page in Jason Grote’s dynamic, intellectually agile 1001**, a postmodern epic about the cultural narratives that shape our lives. In the production’s opening sequence, an Arab woman detonates a bomb in Times Square by opening an antique copy of *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*; for the next half hour the audience is immersed in a frisky, tongue-in-cheek take on the story of Scheherazade (Hope) and the infantile emperor Shahriyar (Rauch). But the play soon hyperlinks out into an Escher world of interlocking time frames and plots, ranging from modern and future New York—where Rauch and Hope are reincarnated as a liberal Jewish grad student and his Palestinian girlfriend—to a deserted beach where Sinbad the Seaman literally meets Jorge Luis Borges... **Ethan McSweeney’s in-the-round staging for Page 73 Productions lays a bright thread through 1001’s labyrinthine twists, with help from a crackerjack design team and cast.**”

Adam Feldman, *TimeOut New York*

“Director Ethan McSweeney, who helmed the play's world premiere in February for Denver Center Theater Company, keeps tight control over the narrative. **Time and space shift in a moment, but it's always clear where we are...** With his design team, **McSweeney also translates ambitious stage directions into dynamic visuals...** As Alan and Dahna dance at a club, for instance, the other cast members carry on an enormous blue cloth, which they hurl upwards like a parachute. As the cloth falls, we expect it to drape around bodies, but it settles to the floor as though nothing were beneath it. Then, in a far corner, we see Alan using the fabric as a blanket. Only now he's Shahriyar, and we've gone back in time. That image not only surprises, but also enhances the theme of fluidity. Elsewhere, McSweeney smoothes the script's roughest edges ... as the narrator stands in place, the other actors scurry like mad, changing costumes or hurling sets into place. The monologues feel vital because we watch how they summon a world into being.”

Mark Blankenship, *Variety*

“**Ethan McSweeney’s kinetic direction keeps the piece, at the Baruch Performing Arts Center, moving in a quick and lucid way**, as it ranges from Sinbad’s tale to Hitchcock’s “Vertigo” to Dahna and Alan on a visit to Gaza.”

Caryn James, *New York Times*

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100 SAINTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

by Kate Fodor

Playwrights Horizons • September-October 2007

Sets: Rachel Hauck • Lights: Jane Cox • Costumes: Mimi O'Donnell • Sound: Matt Hubbs
Ten Best of 2007, Entertainment Weekly, Theatremania, TimeOut New York Magazines

“Under Ethan McSweeney’s astute guidance, *100 Saints You Should Know*’s first-rate cast is beautifully alert to the recurrent sense of missed opportunity built into Fodor’s writing—those moments in which tentative gestures of goodwill are overlooked or deflected, and the ripples of defensiveness that follow. But the scenes that linger most affectingly after the curtain are those in which some small breakthrough is awkwardly accomplished: Theresa stroking Matthew’s head in a hospital emergency room, for instance, or Abby lowering her defenses after a terrifying night. **At its best, this gentle, lovely new play leaves you not just touched, but more sensitive to the value of touch itself.”**

Adam Feldman , *TimeOut New York*

“Ms. Fodor has a fine sense of the forms of emotional aggression, passive and otherwise, that can infuse even the most banal exchanges between parents and children at loggerheads, as well as a good ear for the kinks and curls of speech of people of different generations and education. These gifts are most appealingly on display in the early scenes that set up these fractious relationships. A Scrabble game between Colleen and Matthew, newly returned to the home where he grew up, becomes a deft and touching exercise in thwarted communication. A standard stalemate debate between Abby and Theresa on the usual teenager-parent subjects (school, sex, bad influences) has a piquant ring of realness that keeps it from congealing into clichés.”

Ben Brantley, *New York Times*

“Fodor is blessed with a handsome production. Her play's many short scenes are **sensitively and fluidly staged by Ethan McSweeney.** Rachel Hauck's elegant rotating set (gorgeously lit by Jane Cox) effectively avoids the too many stark blackouts typical of this structure. The five excellent actors succeed in making the most of their characters' vulnerabilities and downplaying their essentially standard issue qualities.”

Elyse Sommer, *CurtainUp*

“Kate Fodor, bless her sympathetic soul, has just the right qualities. Her thoughtful and affecting *100 Saints You Should Know* begins with Theresa (Janel Moloney) scrubbing a toilet. There’s something so direct, so matter-of-fact about showing her on the job—most plays of this kind would just have her complaining about it to her alienated kid—**that Fodor’s story ennobles her, like a Dutch master immortalizing a laundress at work...**All of this might have yielded little more than a Raymond Carver story if not for **an exquisite cast, expertly directed by Ethan McSweeney.** Thanks to some go-for-broke choices, impressive young Zoe Kazan makes the daughter seem part cherub and part imp—a touchingly vulnerable hellion.”

Jeremy McCarter, *New York Magazine*

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1001

by Jason Grote

Denver Center Theatre Company • January 2007

Denver Post Ovation Award, Rocky Mountain News Best of 2007

“Helmer McSweeney pull out all the stops to carry Grote’s Google-inspired mental hopscotch onto the stage. He employs one of Denver’s top DJ’s, Sara Thurston, for a live mix that taps into contemporary emotions latent in the hybrid storyline, a potent lure for the twentysomething demographic. Building on the extravagant embellishments gathered under the collective literary umbrella known as “The Arabian Nights” playwright Jason Grote delivers a phantasmagoric take on the timeless tales in “1001,” **explored to visual and emotional perfection by director Ethan McSweeney and the cast and crew ... Thirty-one economical scenes punctuated by stunning craft work lend a quick-cutting, cinematic texture** that suggests possible adaptability to the bigscreen.”

Bob Bows, *Variety*

“Innovative spectacle...dazzling staging. **McSweeney and his completely winning young ensemble of six newcomers employ novel staging concepts that would make Julie Taymor proud.**”

John Moore, *Denver Post*

“Director Ethan McSweeney meets the playwright’s challenge with a production as inventive as the script: trap doors, luxe costumes, the transformative dance of sex under a blue parachute and a Cirque de Soleil death plunge increase the comedy and the otherworldliness, as well as comment on that exoticism. McSweeney provides one more bit of luxury and energy with DJ Sara Thurston, who mixes contemporary and Eastern strains throughout the evening. Like everything else in this show, it is both ancient and immediate, celebratory and mournful, fact and fiction.”

Lisa Borenstein, *Rocky Mountain News*

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A BODY OF WATER

by Lee Blessing

The Old Globe Theatre • February-March, 2006

San Diego Critics Circle Award for Best Director, Best Play, and Best Ensemble

“[A] deftly acted, meticulously directed and beautifully designed production... Director Ethan McSweeney underscores the farcical elements in Blessing’s script, an aspect of tone probed astutely by Sandy Duncan... Blessing’s play is an all-American family drama...a drawing room tragic-farce [and] what a drawing room it is...[an] austere platform of dark planks with matching coffee table and a few white and chrome designer chairs floats on four pools of aquamarine water which York Kennedy’s lighting set to shimmering. **[McSweeney] also creates a rain shower that is magical.** Michael Roth’s original music – for stings, female voices and the virtuoso Peter Sprague on guitar – creates similar effects ... **For the playwright, “A Body of Water” represents a breakthrough toward a more distilled and abstract form of storytelling.**”

Anne Marie Welsh, *San Diego Union-Tribune*

“McSweeney has elicited exciting portrayals of calm at the edge of reason as well as crack creative work from his designers ... [especially] an unforgettable sequence when, between two Act II scenes, the windows lower into the pools instead of rising. When the panes are pulled up to haunting piano accompaniment, the perforated troughs along the bottom create sheets of rain. It’s a powerful and ominous image ...”

Theaterealtor.com

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A BODY OF WATER

by Lee Blessing

Guthrie Theater • June-July, 2005

Best New Play, Minneapolis Star Tribune

“The Guthrie production, directed by frequent Blessing collaborator Ethan McSweeney, develops an autumnal chill that nicely complements the plays sorrowful undertow. Dead leaves swirl outside a giant picture window that overlooks an endless, indistinct expanse of water [and] falling shadows hint at the primordial fear that night will swallow all memory.”

Peter Ritter, *Variety*

“Director Ethan McSweeney again teams with Blessing to produce a smooth, seamless staging. McSweeney finds the mordant humor in the piece and shapes and blends the performances so that characters and audience alike spend the evening at the brink of understanding, which is right where the playwright wants us.”

Dominic Papatola, *Pioneer Press*

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CHASING NICOLETTE

Music by David Friedman, Book and Lyrics by Peter Kellog

Prince Music Theater • December-January, 2004/5

Ten Barrymore Award Nominations, including Best Director, Best Musical

“HILARIOUS! *A Funny Thing* and *The Producers* are fast company to travel in, but this new show at the Prince Music more than keeps up...the high-quality script and score are presented in a top-notch production directed by Ethan McSweeney. Led by Bronson Pinchot in the principal comic role, the cast is uniformly strong, Neil Patel’s settings are colorful and comically effective, and Constance Hoffman’s costumes evoke the period with flair.”

Douglas J Keating, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Crime is up employment down and still our taxes soar...’ The year is 1224, the ‘modern times’ of this appealing musical, and – despite its Big Issues (‘race, religion, color, class, and money’) – the temptation to make it relevant is cleverly resisted. Performed by a uniformly fine cast, ‘Chasing Nicolette’ is both melodic and witty – all the dialogue is in couplets and a can-you-top-this game develops as we wait for the next impossible rhyme – but the show is goofy too, and likely to appeal to kids as well as adults.”

Toby Zinman, *Variety*

“This musical has it all...the kind of show they mean when people ask, “why don’t they make musicals like they used to?” Ethan McSweeney directs with verve, pulling together the action, pacing, music, and visual components.”

Kathryn Oselund, *Curtain Up*

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MR. MARMALADE

by Noah Haidle

South Coast Repertory Theater • April-May, 2004

OCIE Award for Best Production

“The name ‘Mr. Marmalade’ is the only sweet, tasty, and benign aspect of South Coast Repertory’s controversial world-premiere play. In the best sequence of this production, **superbly directed by Ethan McSweeney**, Adams opens his oversize trench coat (a costume triumph for Angela Balogh Calin) and pours out mountainous amounts of junk food stolen from 7-Eleven, then proudly organizes a dinner of treats for himself and Lucy”

Joel Hirschorn, *Variety*

“...All of this might be a bit too horrifying if Haidle, director Ethan McSweeney and the designers weren’t continually reminding viewers that what’s unfolding onstage is merely make believe.”

Darryl H. Miller, *The Los Angeles Times*

“**Director Ethan McSweeney has worked hard with Nagel and Adams. Their performances are childlike, not childish; they don’t resort to the kind of surface brattiness and over-the-top physicality some adult actors employ when playing kids.**”

Paul Hodgins, *The Orange County Register*

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CTRL+ALT+DELETE

by Anthony Clarvoe

George Street Playhouse • March-April, 2002

Best of 2002, New Jersey Star Ledger

“Cinematic... Crafty plot twists...Delightful surprises! From the first sleek second the play is a whirl of fast-forward motion. **Mr. McSweeney is an interpretive whiz who knows how to elicit the best in play and players.**”

Alvin Klein, *The New York Times*

“Don’t be surprised if Clarvoe’s serious comedy about serious money becomes another New Jersey-to-New York Wall Street smash. It’s a much better portrait of the business world and contains more funny lines than Neil Simon gave his comedies in his prime. Director Ethan McSweeney has whipped his production into a lightning-fast pace, and sure found the right actors to perform it. The result is **the edgiest, hippest show that George Street has ever attempted.**”

Peter Filicia, *The Star Ledger*

“The subtle fury of the play’s narrative is acutely accented by McSweeney’s crisp staging.”

Robert L. Daniels, *Variety*

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NEVER THE SINNER

by John Logan

John Houseman Theater • January-May 1998

American Jewish Theater • December - January 1997/98

Signature Theater, Washington, DC • September-October 1997

Winner of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Play

Four additional OCC and Five Drama Desk Nominations including Best Director

Five Helen Hayes Award Nominations including Best Play and Best Director

“In John Logan’s remarkable play, Clarence Darrow tells a judge that Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, who murdered a 14-year-old boy in 1924 were “much like all of us.” The emotion and intellectual force of the production owes as much to the direction of Ethan McSweeney and his cast as to the author. **The secret of its power in Mr. McSweeney’s handling of it is a rejection of sensationalism in presenting one of the most sensational crimes of the 1920’s. The cast is up to the formidable demands Mr. McSweeney makes on it for adroitness.**”

D. J. R. Bruckner, *The New York Times*

“A great evening of theatre...One of the year’s best!...An excellent and compelling play...The present production could hardly be bettered – Ethan McSweeney’s hair-triggered staging takes the play and runs with it. Enthralling and exceptional!”

Clive Barnes, *The New York Post*

“Ethan McSweeney’s crisp, intelligent staging gives the play a resonance that could well echo today’s headlines...As the destructive neurotics bonded in a purposeless crime, Solomon and Bowcutt offer a tandem tour de force...The re-enactment of the murder and the disposal of the boy’s body is chilling, and it is followed by a victorious of death to the strains of ‘After You’ve Gone’ that is positively numbing.”

Robert L. Daniels, *Variety*

“‘Sinner’ is a winner! Explosive, hypnotic, timely, fascinating. A superb production. On its own, the play could have a merely documentary feel. But Ethan McSweeney’s superb production unfolds with a hypnotic rhythm.”

Fintan O’Toole, *New York Daily News*

“John Logan’s ‘Never the Siner’ is a theatrical whirlwind! Two stunning leading performances by Jason Bowcutt and Michael Solomon and amazingly inventive direction by Ethan McSweeney.”

Dennis Cunningham, CBS-TV

“Sexy, Psychologically compelling and visually striking.”

Bill Stevenson, *Entertainment Weekly*

“Riveting! A taut, passionate psycho-sexual waltz.”

Michael Sommers, *Newhouse Newspapers*

“McSweeney more or less treats the play as if it were a snake and himself and the audience the hypnotized rabbits...McSweeney not only gives it theatrical vibrancy with his mannered but taut direction, he fills it out with his own uneasy, ambivalent reaction to the material.

McSweeney has for several seasons been an assistant director to the Shakespeare Theater’s Michael Kahn, and no doubt learned some of his impressive visual technique from him. But a director can’t be taught to how to fuse with a script like this, so that his own reaction becomes part of the drama. The fashion in today’s theater is to bully an audience, shake it up, or at least, stare it down. But McSweeney is with the audience, mesmerized by the awful mystery at the heart of this material.”

Lloyd Rose, *The Washington Post*