

Great Barrington Public Theate, Great Barrington, MA
How to NOT Save the World with Mr. Bezos by Maggie Kearnan
Directed by Clay Hopper. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“I’m sorry. Really very sorry.”

Maggie Kearnan’s play about the title character is a fantasy, but a dark one, one that might hurt people, or elate people according to the sharp political divide which dominates our world today. In this production presented by Great Barrington Public Theater at the Daniel Arts Center at Simon’s Rock college of Bard, three actors and an assistant stage manager dominate the stage and play our Kearnan’s remarkable work, involving the audience in fun ways which ought to make a difference, but actually don’t. The outcome of the drama is decided beforehand by the creators and many surprises lay in waiting. It is a fantasy well worth exploring but there is no fairy godmother, no pumpkin and no dwarves, in fact nothing familiar comes to mind.



Noah Ilya Alexis Tuleja, Eliza Fichter; Photo: Lauren Jacobbe

A journalist, Cherry Beaumont, is interviewing Jeff Bezos in a private room in a government facility. Reportedly other major political figures are also being talked to in other rooms in the same building. There is a slight antagonism between Bezos and Cherry which she keeps trying to ameliorate. But it persists. She is, unknown to her, assisted by a fact Checker who indicates lies, truths and fictions as the interview continues.

Cherry is played by Eliza Fichter who brings both beauty and a form of sterility to her role, an inevitable combination for a subtle seductress and overwhelming personality, a woman of intent. She plays off this combination of qualities for most of the play and changes into a manic, non-mercurial mind with a single intention. It is a devastating performance, one that I will not forget for a long time.

Bezos is undertaken by Noah Ilya Alexis Tuleja and he assumes the role of a multi-billionaire with simplicity and ease. His initial minimalist actions and reactions are deceptive for underneath his character’s ease in a curious situation lies the rumble of thunder and the deep need for competition which ultimately emerges. Tuleja is an actor with hidden strengths and clearly a willingness to assume a role that casts him in a sorry light, a sympathetic light and true



Noah Ilya AlexisTuleja, Eliza Fichter;
Photo: Lauren Jacobbe

light of comprehension. There is never a moment in which he is vague or withdrawn. He is always the man we assume him to be in life and in fiction. Bezos remembers all his falsehoods as inately as he recalls truths and the curious confusion of the two are often remarked upon by the Fact Checker. If he could hear the corrections he might be mortified, but he doesn't and he isn't and he remains the aloof man of money he has always been. When he and Cherry compete the world is clearly his half-shucked oyster.



Shai Vaknine; Photo: Lauren Jacobbe

The Fact Checker is played, on a high platform overlooking the conference room, by Shai Vaknine. Initially I felt he came from a very different place, professionally, but by the end of the show he had assumed a reality that was unquestionable even in his most frivolous moments. It is not the role of a lifetime but it is one that makes its mark and Vaknine handles it very well.

The physical production is excellent. Juliana von Habrich has created a setting that is superb and so right for this show as it is moved into a variety of shapes and positions as needed. Matthew Adelson's lighting design beautifully takes into account the wild moods of sequences. George W. Veale VI's costumes define all three characters to a tee. Nathan Leigh's sound and music work to the play's advantage as do

Jordan Schwarz's projections.

Director Clay Hopper rivets our attention for the entire ninety minutes of the play. His work is so basic and intrinsic to this play's themes, words and ideas that we are never set free from it for even a moment. We are relieved when it ends and the company takes its bows for this play in intrusively realistic and ultimately frightening.

Can I say I loved this play? No. I can say it captured me and my heartbeat speeded up at various times, yes, and most theater does not produce that reaction in me. You have to see it to understand and believe what I'm not telling you. I don't believe in spoilers.

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How to Not Save the World with Mr. Bezos plays at the Daniel Art Center at Simon's Rock through June 22. For information and tickets go greatbarringtonpublictheater.org or call 413-372-1980.