

‘Break of Noon’ – Deeper Questions Behind a Simple Surface

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Kelly Mak as Gigi with William Poole as John Smith in ReAct’s *The Break of Noon*. • Photo by Truman Buffett.

Workplace violence sometimes seems endemic in the United States. And, now, local theatre company [Repertory Actors Theatre](#) (ReACT) presents Neil LaBute’s latest play, *The Break of Noon*, which explores the aftermath of a workplace shooting in which 37 people are killed.

ReACT is no stranger to LaBute’s challenging work.

“We’ve done staged readings of most of LaBute’s recent works and staged his play *The Shape of Things* on our mainstage several years ago,” said ReACT Artistic Director David Hsieh. “LaBute is a playwright who likes to shock and raise conversations among his audience viewers with his plays. *The Break of Noon* is

no exception.”

Actor Kelly Mak, who plays the role of Gigi, agrees that LaBute will certainly pose challenges in the theatre.

“Having been a professional actor for 10 years, I’ve never had such an audacious and vulnerable role as Gigi,” Mak said. “I was apprehensive at first when David said he wanted me to play her, as she is a prostitute.”

However, the artistic team aims to foreground the internal experiences of the characters, rather than focus on sensationalism.

“While the plot is started by a mass shooting event, there’s actually little actual violence presented on stage,” Hsieh said. “It’s the play’s exploration of religion that is more intriguing.”

Mak echoed Hsieh’s emphasis on character.

“David talked about how we didn’t want to portray any stereotypes with this play, making sure we give all of our characters the authenticity they deserve, making them relatable to the audience,” Mak said. “So for me, I had to find what Gigi got out of being a prostitute—how it’s fabulously fun for her to be sensual and enticing, how extremely good she is at her job and at reading people, very street-smart.”

Hsieh said that it is in these interpersonal exchanges that the mystery unfolds.

“We’re presented with a morally corrupt man who, after surviving the worst office mass shooting event in our nation’s history, claims that God saved him and sets forth on a mission to change the world,” Hsieh said.

However, this new mission raises more questions than it answers.

“Is he lying for personal gain, or did he really have a convertive experience?” Hsieh suggested. “His plays seem simple on the surface but they are deceptively tricky. LaBute leaves that up to the audience to decide and argue over.”

The Break of Noon runs through September 28 at Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, 4408 Delridge Way SW, Seattle. For more information, visit www.reacttheatre.org.