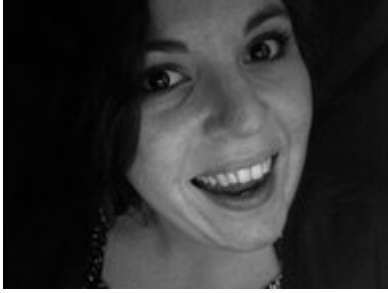


Elemental Theatre Presents Bare Stages



Katie Hughes

It is reassuring to know that innovative and experimental theatre is alive and well at AS220. In the space formerly known as Perishable Theatre, now The Performance Space at 95 Empire, new ideas are thriving.

Audiences who frequented the fresh, new theatre fare at Perishable were concerned that their initiative of supporting experimental, new work would be compromised after the change. Not so.

There are several companies "In Residence" at AS220, however, the space at 95 Empire is still available to other performers. Elemental Theatre is a group still in search of a performance space of their own. They are well-known for their annual "Go-Go" plays, and are currently experimenting with the work of non-playwrights. This series is titled *Bare Stages: New Plays in Various States of Undress*.

That may sound odd, but many actors, stage managers and directors also want to write. So the Elemental decided to take a chance on some of these other theatre people - those unschooled in the art of playwriting. The works have been presented since the first of the year. The pieces are in various stages of development, and all are presented with minimal set pieces and no special wardrobe. Plays are presented to the audience, who is asked to stay afterward to give candid feedback to the playwright.

I went to see *Coping Mechanisms and Ladle Day Saints* by Katie Hughes. Hughes has worked with Elemental Theatre as a stage manager, actor and managing director. Her staged reading was directed by Alexander Platt.

Essentially, shortly after their mother passes away, a grown up brother and sister try to cope with the resulting changes at a holiday family gathering. Presented as a staged reading, it was an entertaining comedy, but with a few sad scenes. With flashbacks of the brother and sister from childhood, it all made sense, but did feel a bit uneven.

Afterward, the audience was quite forthcoming with constructive criticism, and Hughes took all the suggestions in stride, making notes in a giant binder.

It is fascinating to get a chance to see and be part of the creative process. The unschooled playwrights are thrilled to have a chance to show their work and get feedback.

According to artistic director Alexander Platt, the response to this series has been very positive. There

are plans underway to repeat the series with all new plays. The next in the series is *Ghost Story* by Dave Rabinow on March 19 at 7:30pm.

For more information about Elemental Theatre Collective, their work and this series, please visit elementaltheatre.org.