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FringeNYC 2010 Festival Review BANSHEE OF BAINBRIDGE

nytheatre.com review

Josephine Cashman · August 16, 2010

Mij wears a green t-shirt. It says, "Green For Life," but instead of an Irish shamrock to celebrate his heritage, it's the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. This sums up the character perfectly. His mother controls virtually every aspect of his life and he has never lived anywhere except with her. Although he's now a man in his 30s, he's still not allowed out after dark, reads only comic books, and his mother signs her checks so he can buy groceries. He's a study of arrested development.

None of this bodes well, especially when his mother dies during the summer of 1985. He has to find a job—something he's never done—and he gets one collecting garbage for an Irish-run mafia, which does nothing for his sense of alienation in his new world. One night he sees an apparition of a woman in white—a banshee, a ghost that foretells death. In the span of three months, he wreaks havoc on his neighborhood of Bainbridge, becoming, in his own way, a banshee.



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HOME

"Bainbridge is a sick face that needs to see a doctor," and Mij blames the Hispanic people who have moved into the neighborhood. His co-worker Sal, played by an excellent Ralph McCain, teaches him that they live in a world where it would take a super hero (in this case Jesus or the superhero Mij creates), or a warrior, to drive out the Hispanics to return order to his neighborhood.

Michael Wolfe does an astonishing job in the role of Mij—he carries the play, making the audience feel sympathy for this man-child, even when we wince at his actions. Wolfe makes Mij's grief palatable as he weeps and sleeps in his mother's bed, and his then empty rebellion against her by breaking into the liquor cabinet that she had locked away from him. Wolfe's adept portrayal of this angry, and grief-stricken man is both arresting (in more than one way) and enthralling. Another standout is Jack R. Marks, who does double duty as Father Bishop, the priest who tries to save Mij, and Jimmy, the father who abandoned him. Both characters have their own tactics to help Mij, and yet each attempt falls flat, just as Mij's attempts to be a hero fall flat. Marks does a wonderful job with both roles, and his physicality and character choices are marvelous.

Written by Jim Tierney, the play is intriguing, but it could use some judicious editing. The play felt long; some of the scenes seem a little superfluous, and could have been folded into other scenes without losing the appeal of the play. It's a rough play, but Dianna Martin directs her actors well, bringing out the humor in the play, as well as the sadness. She does a great job using the sparse set (which is uncredited). The lighting design by Alison May also communicates the hopeless and violent feelings many people of Bainbridge have.

Ultimately, Mij is caught between his own demons and an unsympathetic world, tries to save it, and to become the hero he always dreamed of. *Banshee of Bainbridge* is a story of a gritty, decomposing neighborhood, where Irish and Hispanic people live an uneasy and violent existence where banshees abound, warning of death and disappointment.

Pictured: Shelley Karen Molad and Ivan Goris (photo © Dale Harris)

Venue: [Robert Moss Theatre](#)

Price: \$15 - \$18

Buy tickets for this show:

[Fri August 13 7:15 pm](#)
[Mon August 16 9:15 pm](#)
[Sat August 21 12:00 pm](#)
[Sun August 22 6:30 pm](#)
[Fri August 27 3:45 pm](#)

Artists Involved:

- Author/Creator: Jim Tierney
- Director: Dianna Martin
- Producer: Jim Tierney

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