

# see a play.com

productions

in the spotlight

behind the scenes

ticket services

theatre dining guide

about the league

employment opportunities

auditions



**Sign up to be notified about audition opportunities!**

**Sign up to be notified about classes and workshops!**

**Sign up to be notified about employment opportunities!**

**Sign up to be notified about upcoming events!**

## audience reviews

### *Fat Pig*, Capital Stage

**Review:** Capital Stage has mounted an exquisite production of Neil LaBute's FAT PIG on their stage aboard the Delta King. The show is perfectly cast and exceptionally directed. The set and lighting work well, and the soundtrack helps drive the show and the audience through the roller coaster of bellyaching laughs and heartbreaking tears. This piece could have easily focused entirely on issues around body image and our beauty focused culture, but director Stephanie Gularte is too smart and sophisticated to let it stop there. The core of this production explores issues of truth and honesty, strength of character, and the ugliness that is just underneath the surface of our relationships. Good theatre holds a mirror up to us as both individuals and society. The discomfort about FAT PIG is that we can see all too clearly in the mirror that Gularte and her cast hold up to us. FAT PIG succeeds on so many levels. All four members of the cast rise to the great challenge of the script and turn in honest performances: their emotions are true, and they never miss a beat. And I doubt if any person experiencing this production will leave unaffected or unchanged in some way. Don't miss this opportunity to see an amazing cast in a wonderful play. Thanks Capital Stage for taking risks and for bringing us theatre that challenges us.

**Review:** Ever since playwright Neil LaBute gained national recognition with the film version of his "In the Company of Men," his plays have been a continuing source of controversy. Tending to focus on the cruelty that epitomizes the worst aspects of human interaction, LaBute creates characters who border on caricatures (one-dimensional and decidedly unappealing).

Still, his none-too-subtle commentary on the human condition has gained him critical acclaim and a sense of nervous anticipation with the

**Sign up to be notified when a new production is opening!**

debut of each of his new plays. The most recent of his efforts, "Fat Pig," began a one-month, Sacramento-premier run last weekend on the Capital Stage theater on the Delta King in Old Sac. We attended the opening night performance.

While we hesitate to draw hasty conclusions, Mr. LaBute, now, at 44, well into what should be the "grown up" phase of his writing career, appears to have discovered something akin to his "soul." At least that thought occurred to us as we observed the well-rounded and deeply drawn characterizations that he has created in this four-character, extended one-act play.

The story is of the basic boy-meets-girl variety, with a decided twist. Here, the girl (Helen) is a tad on the overweight side ("full-figured" or "big-boned" would be the polite ways of describing her), and, refreshingly, she is not in the least bit concerned about it. The boy (Tom), on the other hand, is a health-conscious type who wouldn't even consider splurging on a serving of chocolate pudding under normal circumstances.

Of course, as the two engage in a charming first encounter over lunch, normal circumstances give way to the allure of emotional involvement, and before the lunch is over, the boy does, indeed, at the girl's urging, indulge in the aforementioned pudding, thereafter proceeding through a relatively normal courtship that culminates in physical intimacy (portrayed, in this production, with a semi-risque scene that ends with the lovers partially disrobed, their bodies entwined).

Complicating the budding relationship are the boy's work-place friendships. His down-the-hall office mate (Carter) is the prototypical LaBute "villain," a frat-boy type whose focus on women is from the neck down. Carter reacts with a combination of bemused shock and contained revulsion on discovering the subject of Tom's ardor.

The other thorn in Tom's side is a former girlfriend (Jeannie) who happens to be the accounting clerk in the office. Jeannie can't believe she has been dumped for someone of Helen's proportions.

Both of these friends pummel Tom with the kind of peer pressure and disapproval that puts his love to the test, and the thrust of the dramatic tension in the play revolves around whether Tom will pass it.

Along the way, however, LaBute provides both Carter and Jeannie with human qualities that would not have been as apparent in his earlier plays.

Thus, Carter has a scene wherein he almost seems to be exploring previously uncharted territory, achieving something akin to personal insight when he reveals that his own mother was obese and a source of constant embarrassment for him as a child.

And Jeannie, in her rants at Tom, discloses that she is her own worst enemy in her efforts to be physically appealing to men, forever choosing the wrong guys and always setting herself up to be treated as badly as she accuses Tom of having treated her.

The script crackles with humor and pathos, which is one very good reason to see this production. An even better one may be the quality of the direction (by Stephanie Gularte, the company's "Producing Artistic Director") and the terrific acting by all four of the actors. (We'd also be remiss in failing to note the excellent set designs, by Jonathan Williams, which Gularte uses most effectively on the undersized stage that contains all of the play's action.)

Each actor deserves star status, as all four shine throughout the 100-minute performance. Christin O'Cuddehy is terrific in her courageous portrayal of Helen. Her final scene with Tom is emotionally wrought and genuine down to the last tear. Shaun Carroll is just about perfect as Tom. His initial attraction to Helen is effectively conveyed, as is his subsequent hesitancy and uncertainty about their relationship.

As Carter, Michael Wiles has some of the play's best lines. He is completely believable in the role, so likeable and yet so detestable at the same time. And Katherine C. Miller successfully captures Jeannie's pain from Tom's rejection, along with the anger that is a byproduct of her frustration.

"Fat Pig" is a play that merits recognition and attention, and this superb production of it makes it easy to swallow, even if its message may be hard to accept.

- E. Haig, Sacramento Gazette

**Review:** Neil LaBute knows how shallow and cruel young men can be (if you saw the movie "In the Company of Men" you know that). In Fat Pig he adds a 28-year-old woman from the accounting department whose own insecurities and fears render her spiteful when the man she has

been trying to snag (Tom) prefers a "fat bitch" (her words, not mine), to her. The funny thing about this incisive play is that it is so very FUNNY! The one liners (especially from Tom's office buddy Carter) are total zingers. The audience laughed continuously -- and not out of embarrassment, either. It's definitely a send-up of mass intolerance based on external appearance. Being a couple of decades older than the characters, I'd like to say I'm "beyond" judging people solely on their looks. But I know plenty of 40, 50 and even 60-somethings who aren't. This prejudice is real. You are sure to be reminded of someone you know (or knew) among the 4 characters. I thought all were acted superbly. The set and costume changes work perfectly for Capital Stage. And best of all -- at least in my opinion -- is the music, which features several Cake songs (brilliant!). Don't be put off by the title. Go see Fat Pig!  
- Susan

**Review:** Capital Stage constantly amazes me with their choice of show and quality of work. I'm sure they will be on several "Best of..." lists this year. I've seen Fat Pig twice now and was mesmerized each time. There's so much more to this show than meets the eye. The title character has a charm and sense of humor that the actor playing her brings onstage with wonderful energy and no apologies, which only makes the ending that much harder to witness. Her love interest, Tom, is someone you're rooting for but winds up doing exactly what you expect him to do. He's the real pig in this play.

This show, like most Capital Stage productions, stays with you long after the house lights come up. I've been thinking about the ending and my reaction to it. I keep thinking "Couldn't she see this coming? Didn't she know what was inevitable?" and I feel a bit of disappointment in her. Then I hear the nagging voice of one of the other characters, Carter, in my head saying "They should run with their own kind" and I feel a bit of disappointment in myself.  
- David Fulk

[Close this window](#)

[productions](#) | [in the spotlight](#) | [behind the scenes](#) | [ticket services](#)  
[theatre dining guide](#) | [about the league](#) | [employment opportunities](#) | [auditions](#)

© 2007 the league of sacramento theatres | [webmaster@seeaplay.com](mailto:webmaster@seeaplay.com)

web site designed and developed by Blossom Web