

New England Entertainment Digest - Online

Brought to you by JAC Publishing & Promotions - Serving New England Since 1979!

Please note... the NEED Office will be on vacation August 1 thru 15, 2008.



[Theatre Headlines](#)
[Music Headlines](#)
[Dance Headlines](#)

[JACK JONES: A Conversation in Song](#) by Jules Becker

YOM KIPPUR: (Midtown International Theatre Festival, Abingdon Theatre Complex, New York (through August 2; festival running through August 10. 800-279-4200 or www.midtownfestival.org). How important is Israel to American Jews? While the answer to that question may ostensibly seem a no-brainer, recent research indicates that there are significant numbers of respondents who are profoundly ambivalent about their connection to the Jewish state. Such is the case with some of the four central characters in Meri Wallace's thoughtful and affecting new play "Yom Kippur" at New York's Midtown International Theatre Festival.

- Auditions
- Performances
- Workshops
- Jules Becker's Quick Takes
- Reviews
- Bob Fraser's SHOW BIZ HOW TO
- Janice Luise-Lutkus' It's Not Luck
- Submit Info
- Advertise
- About Us
- Archives
- Links

If the provocative world premiere begins in 1973 Jerusalem on the morning of the title holiday and soon confronts the start of the war of the same name (with the attack of Egypt and Syria), the focal two 20-something couples' diverse views about life in Israel and their responsibilities as new settlers certainly resonate today. American Jews-and Jews throughout the world, for that matter-continue to debate the nature of Israel's response to the terrorism of Hamas and Hezbollah on the one hand and its involvement in peace talks on the other. As the Yom Kippur War begins, former Kibbutznick and artist Yitz kisses his pregnant former dancer wife Yael and leaves to join his unit, while his cellist best friend Ephraim, who admits to "freezing under fire, speaks of obtaining a letter from a psychologist excusing him from enlisting.

Although this often touching drama sometimes comes across as too episodic, with many quick scene changes from their two-bedroom apartment and a park bench to hospital room and air raid shelter, Wallace does well capturing the emotional roller coaster rides that Yael, her best friend Sara and Ephraim experience-first as they await the return of Yitz and later as harsh post-war realities call into question their evolving feelings about Aliyah and their respective futures in Israel. Loving new mother Yael worries about her son's future as the climate of violence and constant military struggle with Israel's neighbors hits home directly. Complicating further already difficult situations is Ephraim's obsession with Yael, whom- Sara fears- he has always loved more than her.

Strong-willed Yael tries to be as committed to Israel as she is to her young son. Her rich circle of friends prove to be both beneficial and challenging. Thirty year old Hadassah Hospital doctor Shlomo, himself an immigrant, supplies timely advice to her as well as Ephraim. Sara, for her part, never lets Ephraim's love for her best friend jeopardize her closeness to Yael. Even so, an unexpected visit from Yael's cold and distant mother-in-law Bella and the latter's dark observations about the impact of Israel's wars on her family irrevocably shake her daughter-in-law's resolve.

- [Professional Theatre](#)
- [- African American Companies](#)
- [Community Theatre](#)
- [Academic Theatre](#)
- [Youth Theatre](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Dance](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [People](#)
- [- Director/Musical Directors](#)
- [Casting](#)

Some theatergoers- this critic included, may feel that Yael is too tenacious a character to let a blunt but largely unsympathetic in-law like Bella persuade her to return to America. Others may see her decision as a logical consequence of her concerns as a mother. Still, 29 year old Avi, a pivotal Israeli army captain, provides a key note of optimism when he declares, "I'm here. Israel is here. Come back." At the very least, Wallace's heartfelt play is likely to have audience members examining their own ties to Israel even as they consider the American immigrants' respective commitments and relationships.

Under Halina Ujda's crisp direction, a generally winning cast makes the most of the characters' journeys. Arela Rivas brings a compelling combination of toughness and warmth to heroine Yael. Gayle Robbins catches all of Sarah's loyalty to Yael and her steadfastness as a young settler. Orion Delwaterman adds some complexity to the tricky role of Ephraim, a character that needs more development in the later going. Evan Sokal is very engaging as big-hearted Shlomo. Aylan Orian, who somewhat resembles a young Kirk Douglas, captures both the sharp candor and the deep tenderness of Sabra Avi. Shane Jerome has the right likeability as Yitz, while Annalisa Loeffler is rivetingly grim as Bella.

Early on Yael offers the following insight her father used to say- that "Yom Kippur is more about making amends with your fellow man than fasting." While the couples and their friends may not be scrupulous about ritual observance, most of them do take pains with acts of loving-kindness. Likewise, "Yom Kippur" the play

- Vendors
- [Books/Scripts](#)
- [Box Office/Tickets](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Dance](#)
- [Costumes & Make-Up](#)
- [Audio](#)
- [Set Design/Rigging](#)
- [Lighting](#)

[Special Effects](#)
[Consulting](#)
[Services](#)
[Supplies](#)
[Gifts](#)

Contact Us
 Raves

make timely points about connection and Israel as a bastion of human caring.

WHEN IT'S HOT. IT'S COLE! A Cole Porter Cabaret: (American Repertory Theatre, Zero Arrow Theatre, Cambridge, MA extended thru 7/27. 617-547-8300). Cole Porter may have gotten no kick from champagne, but he apparently had a better response to the Bible. Just look at the numerous allusions in some of his most impressive songs to its stories and characters. From Eve in "They All Fall Down" and the Tower of Babel in "You're the Top" to the tongue in cheek, rapier-witty 1933 "Solomon" about the fabled wise king's 1000 wives, the gifted wordsmith clearly enjoyed including such contexts and situations in much of his repertoire. Director Scott Zigler and collaborator Peter Bayne have conceived a snappy revue entitled "When It's Hot It's COLE! a Cole Porter Cabaret" which displays Porter's facility with biblical allusion and a kind of encyclopedic frame of reference. American Repertory Theatre's second Zero Arrow Theatre musicfest- after last season's acclaimed "What a Marvelous Party!"- proves more electric and satisfying than the earlier Noel Coward tribute.

While both shows share the considerable talents of four of Boston's best performers- namely Remo Airaldi, Thomas Derrah, Will Lebow and Karen MacDonald, this time with the addition of Parker Posey-like Angela Nahigian, "COLE!" actually does more justice to its equally celebrated subject and his work. Where "Party" sometimes sacrificed Coward's subtlety and lightness to a need to over-punctuate the message of some send-ups and satiric numbers, "COLE!" maintains a balance of romance and playfulness throughout the dense revue's near-30 numbers. If parts of the predecessor appeared more geared to crowd-pleasing, the current effort seems as nightclub 'De-Lovely' as Porter would wish.

Zigler captures the elegance and sophistication of "COLE!" equally well in the formal first act and the casual second. In solo and ensemble, the tuxedo-clad men and the evening dressed women move resonantly and skillfully through both heart-felt and smartly coy lyrics. All five make the most of the vividly inventive opener "Let Do It-let's Fall in Love"-most notably MacDonald about clams and sponges and Derrah about sloths and guinea pigs. Zigler has blocked the show well, moving his cast smoothly from handsome matching black barstools at center stage to various areas of the generous Zero Arrow space-particularly the sleek, long bar itself with a rainbow of bottles hanging overhead. A waiter even brings martinis to MacDonald and Nahigian (there is also continuous service to theatergoers at small cabaret tables) during the sublimely eclectic number "Let's Not Talk About Love" from Venus and Adonis and Adam and Eve to humorous rhymes like "economy" and "Deuteronomy" and the "Tow'r of Ba-abel" and "Betty Gra-abel."

Clearly attention has been paid to the respective strengths of the performers. Derrah, who demonstrated his gifts as a soloist in "Part," finds all of the drama and passion that are integral to "Begin the Beguine." MacDonald, with masterful phrasing catches the poignancy "Miss Otis Regrets" and the rich pathos of "Down in the Depths (on the Ninetieth Floor)". Lebow, whether gesturing from a stool or dancing briefly with Nahigian, easily evokes the lightheartedness of "You Do Something to Me." For her part, Nahigian delivers the smart observations of an ironic gem like "Love for Sale" with singular ruefulness. The standout in "Cole" is Airaldi, who displays fine coloring and robust tone on both the romantic winner "So in Love" and the brilliantly irreverent narrative "Tale of the Oyster." Musical director Miranda Lord provides spirited accompaniment, and Lebow does the same on drums at times-particularly for Derrah and Nahigian's stylish work on "I've Got You Under My Skin."

"COLE!" is true to Porter most of the time. "You're the Top" may look too cutesy during some numbers with moments of over-gesturing, though the inspired lyrics win out with sharp singing. "Too Darn Hot," a showstopper in the Tony -winning musical "Kiss Me Kate," should sizzle more here as a male trio. While the repertoire is generally wide-ranging, there ought to be room for such distinctive treasures as "I Concentrate on You" and "In the Still of the Night." Still, Zigler and his first-class ensemble-to borrow from the composer himself-are riding high in this exuberant songfest.

Some Porter fans embrace the lyrics' cleverness and range of reference that anticipate Sondheim. Others look to such moving and hauntingly melodic classics as "Night and Day." A.R.T.'s joyous "COLE!" celebrates the enduring wonders of both.

OUR TOWN: (Wellesley Summer Theatre Company, Ruth Nagel Jones Theatre, Wellesley College). Thornton Wilder speaks of something eternal in the bones of human beings, and so it goes for his enduringly disarming gem "Our Town." Wellesley Summer Theatre Company artistic director takes her cue from the unassuming but always timely play's return to basic human truths about appreciating the most simple things in the universe and the primacy of human love and caring. In the intimate Ruth Nagel Jones Theatre, Wilder's time capsule-like play attains a remarkably natural pacing with a strong ensemble cast. Charlotte Peed and Lisa Foley smoothly alternate as the pivotal Stage Manager. Peed seems to have the more day-to-day comments and Foley the more philosophical and sweeping ones. The result is a division of labor that establishes the contrasting observations that make the Stage Manager at once understated and insightful about both iconic turn of the 20th century Groves Corners and the world at large. All of the Gibbs and Webbs family parents and children do well with the miming of activities that adds to the folkloric charms of the play. John Davin conveys Dr. Gibbs' strength and wisdom, while Sarah Barton finds Mrs. Gibbs' maternal concerns. Dan Bolton catches all of Mr. Webbs' closeness to his daughter Emily as well as his understanding of his wife. Christine Hamel has all of Mrs. Webb's confidence. The focal friends turned eventually newlyweds are very engaging- Zach Bubolo strikingly direct yet feeling as George and Heather Boas affectingly vulnerable as Emily Webb. Eric Hamel brings sharp characterization to each of his four brief roles- most notably dapper entrepreneur Sam Craig returning from Buffalo due to an untimely passing. Boas is riveting and Bubolo very touching in the closing moments of