

<http://www.fringe festival.org/showDetail.cfm?showID=276&fullreviews=true>

Audience reviews

Average audience review: ★★★★★

★★★★★

"Wow" by Lindsey D.:

Smart, sexy, funny, poignant, beautifully acted - see this show. No really, see this show. (Posted on Aug. 5)

★★★★★

"You Won't Be Cheated" by Nuke Fool:

Emily Gunyou and Randy Reyes put in strong performances in the verbal jousting which is "How to Cheat". The two actors, along author Alan Berks and director Brian Balcom, have produced a stimulating play with two strong characters, where every spoken word and verbalized thought give the audience something to think about. (Posted on Aug. 5)

★★★★★

"Cheating is very entertaining" by Front Row and center:

A great new play by Alan Berks. Great chemistry between the actors. Worked well within the space of the Rarig Arena as they danced and performed among the boxes. Good conversation, good sex ... no cigarettes. A must-see show. (Posted on Aug. 5)

★★★★★

"Best serious Fringe play of 2006" by Dan Pinkerton:

No two ways about it --- this surprising play was the best drama I saw at the 2006 Fringe. I call it "surprising" because Alan Berks, who always writes about serious matters, did so with much more playfulness than I have ever seen him display before. Direction and choreography were also tremendously imaginative, and Emily Gunyou and Randy Reyes were beyond superb. Berks could revisit this material and create a full-length play; there are a few questions left hanging deliciously at the end. But it is complete as is, and more could be less. Catch the last performance! (Posted on Aug. 12)

★★★★★

"In the moment" by dixie treichel:

It turns out cheating is only a metaphor--sometimes..... Well written, directed and performed this show had a surreal timeless feel to it. I didn't walk away with much but loved being in the moment with it. Performed in a theater in the round setting with the excellent complements of sound design and choreography. (Posted on Aug. 13)



"Lapped it up like a thirsty dog." by Narciso Lobo:
I loved, loved, loved this show. (Posted on Aug. 15)



"Thrilling!" by Rosanna Staffa:
This show was a treat! Surprising, delightful, honest and disturbing, all in one punch. There are moments I still revisit. The disturbing was handled with grace, and total understanding for what complexity truly is - not the tidy TV mess to be untangled, but the fuzzy and harsh mess that it truly is. I was grateful I got to theatre (and I don't always feel that) and quite happy. The play entertains with complexity: bravo! (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Go learn 'How To Cheat'!" by Philip Callen:
"How To Cheat" is a funny, sexy, and very smart exploration of how a person decides to cheat on their spouse. And it is, to me, what the Fringe (and all theater, frankly) is when it's at its very best. A great playwright exploring with 2 wonderful actors...Make sure you see this one! (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Discovered: Real People Onstage at the Fringe!!!!" by Matt Sciple:
This is the real deal. An actual play with articulate, vibrant, interesting characters that will make you laugh, think and care what happens to them, embodied by actors and a director who know how to wrestle with complex material and bring it to life, as though it is being discovered for the first time. Yeah, these are the basic building blocks of theatre, but to actually see them fall into place is as breathtaking as it is rare--especially at the Fringe. And in addition to the basics, this play somehow juggles all the ideas generated by a potentially contrived meeting between a journalist and a bio chemist with as much wit and humor as the sexual politics. Plus there's dream sequences, a sexy card game and well-executed dancing. How can you go wrong? (Posted on Aug. 6)



"great show" by Charlie Bethel:
an exploration of desire and responsibility, tightly written, directed with a soft touch and acted with a double-dose of intelligence and impulsivity. i would watch Reyes and/or Gunyou in anything. i even learned something new about the nature of humans. kudos, you guys are first class. xoxo (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Best of My Fringe thus far..." by Mo Perry:

Yup, best thing I've seen in this year's Fringe so far. Heck, best thing I've seen in a while! Impressive writing, lovely acting. Emily G. is ravishing! This is ballsy, beautiful work. Huzzah. (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Haunting." by Leigha Horton:

Haunting. Parts of the script were rather obtuse at times, but not to the point of alienation – it merely added to the intrigue (somewhat reminded me of Tennessee Williams' Two Character Play). I walked away from the show knowing that I liked it, but not yet able to formulate the vocabulary I needed to express why. This morning I woke up, and realized that it was still with me – simmering, becoming more clear and provocative. The actors were powerful and deftly handled the material and accompanying physicality. Highly recommended. Horton's (and Netflix's) rating system: 5 – Loved It; 4 – Really Liked It; 3 – Liked It; 2 – Didn't Like It; 1 – Hated It. (Posted on Aug. 6)



"A Love Story for an Uncertain World" by Amy Hubbard:

Beautifully crafted and directed with outstanding performances by Randy Reyes and Emily Gunyou this is one of the real jems of the Fringe. It is not really about cheating it is rather a haunting love story. (Posted on Aug. 7)



"Wow... I'm going back and bringing friends" by Max Gries:

Smart writing, smart acting, smart directing. Had me at the edge of my seat, and not just during the (much-touted) sex/card scene (although I do love a good game of cards)! (Posted on Aug. 7)



"I was waiting for this show." by billy fury:

It took 6 shows this year before I saw one that blew my socks off. This was it. Wonderfully acted with a script that has lots of meat on it. I continue to "chew on it" 2 days later. Current, thoughtful, tight, clever, AND entertaining! Spend the \$2.50 for a reservation for this one as word of mouth propels the good shows at the fringe and this one is sure to fill the house for it's final two performances. (Posted on Aug. 7)



"Simply Great Theatre" by Derek Miller:

Alan Berks is an amazing writer. Brian Balcom is an amazing director. Emily Gunyou and Randy Reyes are amazing actors. I could probably just end the review here by typing those three sentences; but I'll continue on anyway, because this is the single best show I have seen so far at the Fringe Festival. First, the script... Berks is a great writer. Anyone who saw "Almost Exactly Like Us" at the Loading Dock this year should know that by now. He does a great job of balancing story and message, and he is one of those rare writers that can give characters heightened text that doesn't feel heightened and awkward. Here, he gives us a pair of adulterers escaping a rich, white party to indulge an affair in a long-forgotten room teeming with "future antiques" of someone's childhood. She's a journalist unhappily wed to a boorish but wealthy banker; she's looking for some relief from her real life. He's a research scientist that has become the latest "toast of the town" by leading his field in the study of stem cells; he's in the business of bedding women like her as a way to make up for an underprivileged past. Their dialogue sizzles and sparks as the play moves in and out from reality to dreaming, from naturalism to stylized movement and dance. The show is a pastiche of styles filled with banter that is clever while avoiding the trap of wit, and it has the ability to move from funny to serious at will. The script generates well-placed laughs in the middle of extremely serious scenes and offers up bitter gems in the middle of the funniest parts. At any point, anything could break down, and though the plot is deceptively simple, the audience is always left wondering "God, what's going to happen next?" Now, the directing... Brian Balcolm does a commendable job bringing this piece to the stage. "How to Cheat" is staged in the round, probably the hardest theatre setting to work in, and he seizes hold of every opportunity that it give him. His staging is fluid and circular, utilizing the natural shape of the space instead of fighting its limitations. The characters whirl and cavort, seducing each other at first from across the room and then in progressively tighter spirals until their explosive consummation in the center of the stage. (The sex act, by the way, is simulated through a card game, and Balcolm proves his worth by pulling off the staging of this scene alone.) He keeps the pacing tight and offers up incredible moments of relief and joy as well. And the actors... Well, for starters, Emily Gunyou has a stage presence that anyone would kill for. When she takes the stage, you cannot look away from her. She plays the contradictions of her character so well that you forget she is acting. She is both strong and brittle, intelligent and flustered, witty and spiteful. She has a sense of sad mystery around her; she is the woman in the black dress at the back of the party, distant and magnetic; she is the woman you want to make love to and fix and love and cherish and worship; and you know that you will not be enough for her. She portrays all of this with one look. This is how good she is. Randy Reyes didn't draw me in immediately, and I was fooled into thinking that his acting wasn't up top par; but, once again, he was so spot-on that I forgot he was acting. His character, so well-versed in the art of seduction, approaches the scene so laconically that he flies right under your radar; but that is his secret. By the time you realize his intents, his intelligent, cunning approach, you are watching his character lose his resolve of love 'em and leave 'em as he falls in love with this beautiful, sad woman. There are more subtle and wonderful turns done here by the two of them than I can recall seeing in just about any other piece of theatre I have seen in recent years. Go see this show if you can. And, if you are in the theatre scene here in the Twin Cities, pray that someday you can work with any one of these artists. (Posted on Aug. 7)



"Chemistry With a Biochemist" by Reid Gagle:

Marvelous acting. A solid script with several good belly laughs. Excellent romantic chemistry as the two escapees from a cocktail party engage in banter and get to know each other, followed by the funniest theatrical version of the game of sex I've ever seen. They made good use of the odd Arena space. My criticisms are few. There was an unfortunate dream sequence in the middle of the piece. And at the end, there was an intrusion from the outside world that didn't really fit.

(Posted on Aug. 7)



"A showcase of timing" by Steve Moulds:

Top to bottom, "How to Cheat" operates on finely-tuned moments--from script to direction to performances. It's excellently staged in the round, with a provocative setting. And the hyper-clever script and strong performances are just fun to experience. But its sense of timing is the most profound aspect of this production. If you see the show, just listen to the play. The silences, the starts and stops, draw you in to this skewed universe with humor and mystery. (Posted on Aug. 8)



"Must See" by Callie Sacarelos:

So I went to see "How to Cheat" at the U of M Arena. And it's okay that it was the only show I saw because it was very very good and it should be on your "must see" list. It gets you thinking about so many things, even if you've never cheated on anyone before, because it's not just about cheating. Also, the way they portrayed it on stage was SO creative. (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Brilliant!" by Emily Fisher:

Loved it! Two intriguing characters show us the inner workings of their minds in a fascinating situation. This play made me think, and I enjoyed every minute of it. Don't miss it! (Posted on Aug. 7)



"The Real Thing" by david herr:

This is the best thing I've seen in a theatre in a long time. Super sharp snappy witty fast paced dialogue which explores a complex knot of issues and does it successfully throughout by avoiding formulaic situations and pedestrian solutions. Exceptional acting, writing and direction make "How To Cheat" an articulate, entertaining and compelling MUST SEE! (Posted on Aug. 9)



"One of the Best!" by Chris Roethler:

I am definitely a beginner to intermediate theater goer. That being said, I really enjoyed this show. It kept you interested throughout the entire show, which is hard to do sometimes with only 2 actors. The music in the show was well thought out and matched what the director was trying

to get across. All in all a fantastic show! (Posted on Aug. 9)



"Brilliant!!!" by bogus dood:

I loved this play. My partner brought a whole group of friends back to see this after seeing it the first time. It was amazing. I don't think I've ever seen a love and/or seduction scene onstage before that didn't seem contrived or overblown. This wasn't. I also have never seen anyone play or write about a smart, snappy, sorta sarcastic woman with attitude and not have it fail ... but this was dead on. Both actors seduced the audience on their way to seducing each other.



"gems in the round" by Lane McKiernan:

More in the vein of traditional theater than anything else I've seen so far this year, this show took my breath away (which is saying something, because I'm not so much a traditional theater person—I blame all those formative years I spent running tech at the Red Eye). I sat there, mesmerized, totally captured by the energy between the two characters, waiting to see what would happen next. Only looking back at it can I point in awe to the level of craft that went into making this show what it is, to all the choices made in this production that were just right (if I tell you what they were, I'll give the show away). (Posted on Aug. 11)



"Great" by John Middleton:

Not just great writing and great acting - but a great reminder of what's possible on stage. Every element of the production was cared for and set in play - sound, props, the in-the-round space, costumes, ideas, the audience, reality, dreams, words, movement, lights, music - ALL of it. Like a really good plate-spinning act - but sexier. It's thrilling to put yourself in the hands of these people and go where they take you. The best show I've seen so far. (Posted on Aug. 11)



"How to? No, Really!" by ADAM KING:

Once again local playwright Alan Berks has drawn us into a world that is both real, and surreal at the same time...no easy feat! The very talented Randy Reyes and Emily Gunyou populate this world and take us on a journey of faith, science, faithlessness, politics, and, of course, sex and sexuality. Congrats to all! Folks, there are two more chances to catch this top-notch presentation. Best of the Fringe so far...will it hold up? I'm on a mission to find out. (Posted on Aug. 7)



"Superbly acted" by William Gladen:

A real delight to see this caliber of acting in the fringe. In the arena theater, the actors were able to face each other directly without the need to cheat toward the audience. However, this also meant that the audience only saw one of their faces at a time, which was a shame. The play touched on more moral issues than just cheating in it's fast paced hour, including stem cell research, war, surveillance, and media. On one hand it would have been nice to have more time to absorb it all. On the other hand, it might have been too much to handle in one play. My favorite line (paraphrased) was 'What I did wasn't wrong; I'm single, and wouldn't it be sexist and presumptuous of me to make her decision for her?' (Posted on Aug. 7)



"I Left the Theatre Hungry for More" by Kara Greshwalk:

This show certainly lives up all the great buzz. The performances were natural and sweetly funny, and I was very impressed by the chemistry between the two lovers. My favorite moment was the card game/love-making. It is always a clever choice to ignite passion on the stage without having to beat the audience over the head with it. What smart, sexy performances, great dialogue, and deft, imaginative direction. I would really love to see this fleshed-out to a longer show, as I wasn't quite ready to part with this fascinating love story when I exited the theatre.



"twojew.com review How to Cheat" by David Erickson:

Check out two jew review's podcast review of "How to Cheat" at www.twojew.com/fringe_2006_podcasts, or read about it at www.twojew.com/flog (Posted on Aug. 13)



"A Shining Hour (or so) of the Fringe" by JP Fitzgibbons:

Intelligently and wittily crafted, "How To Cheat" is cleverly staged and wonderfully performed. Even the choreography by Brian Sostek lends itself to the telling of the tale and is remarkably well executed. It is refreshing to see a show that is not only engaging and thought-provoking but visually appealing and different as well. Everything that the Fringe, nay, theater, should be (Posted on Aug. 8)



"Slow-moving but good things are worth waiting for" by Asya Mikhailenko:

This show obviously doesn't need any more praise and I refuse to say that it was flawless - the plot and dialogue was at times contrived and mediocre - but I have to say that the two actors create some of the most fleshed-out characters I've ever found in theater. Not once did I stop think Randy Reyes may be "acting" - incredible! The theatre-in-the-round set puts a nice spin (pardon the pun) on the production. And that ingenious card game scene is sizzling! (Posted on Aug. 8)



"Surprising" by Jenna Papke:

I wasn't sure what to expect from this, but I'm glad I saw it. It took some unusual swerves, but I mostly managed to stay with it. I was impressed with the issues they snuck in on the sly. The dog dream monologue was the weakest part. The strongest part was definitely the card scene. I truly enjoyed watching them have sex scenes without showing sex. It had new ideas, which are hard to find at times. (Posted on Aug. 5)



"Sometimes a Pair Can Win" by Thomas Cassidy:

Stem cell researcher verbally then physically jousts with a pickled (but articulate) journalist after ducking from a party on the edge of many wars. There's a lot woven into this piece, with faith and science cheating us all (they need to mate more often), playing cards used for sex/magic/gambling (and often cheating of course), and boxes of once important things reduced to props. Emily Gunyou and Randy Reyes are fun to watch as they stalk and dance for peace (sic) in time and situation of anything but. A few of the lines didn't sound true to my ears (the racial bon mots were gratuitous), but, overall, the play is a sharp yet hopeful look at an honesty that, (let's be honest), shouldn't toss the cribsheets. (Posted on Aug. 6)



"A Well Acted Triumph" by Gary Dietze:

I went into this show not quite knowing what to expect. I left this show with a deep appreciation for new works. This show is what the Fringe is all about. Ideas, strong acting, and solid direction. Randy Reyes and Emily Gunyou won me over in their portrayals. Their comic timing and line delivery was superb. Wrestling with some (and there's a lot) of the ideas presented takes awhile to sink in, and 2 days later I'm still processing some of them. The only negative comment I would have is that there's too many ideas in the show. What is the show trying to convey? science vs. media? To cheat or not to cheat? What is cheating? The United States relationship with the world? There's a lot of ideas, and I think they could be filtered a little more. But hey, it got me thinking, and I enjoyed the show (performances), so it did a whole lot right. A definite recommend. (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Strong production" by James P:

Nothing screams "Run away!" quite so much as the thought of watching a staging of a drunken seduction turned affair and its resulting fallout. Yet "How to Cheat" comes packed with such nuance, clever staging and strong acting that it overcomes the questionable subject matter. Meredith (Emily Gunyou) and Luisito (Randy Reyes) sneak away from a lavish party into a forgotten storage room, where the married Meredith remains unsure if she wants to continue her fling with single Luisito. After some trite conversation concerning one's place in the world and in a relationship, the pair consummates its tryst emotionally, then physically. The play smartly portrays the characters' inner thoughts using dreams and a metaphor involving playing cards, and their reactions afterward are both unpredictable and believable. An unnecessary coda to the play brings into question the party's true circumstances, but by that time, Gunyou's and Reyes' performances have already won you over despite their somewhat unlikable characters. (Posted on Aug. 8)



"Unbelievable!" by jim anderson:

Not in a good way. Let's view this from a guy's perspective: after the sex it got really boring. I was given nothing to cling to. No emotional investment to the characters, and dialog that didn't ring true. Two characters treading water till their time is up. I personally enjoy complete stories, not just the first half of the first act. The actors were excellent. (Posted on Aug. 8)



"Superb acting, uneven script" by August Berkshire:

Excellent acting, and about half the script was really good, but the other half seemed like filler. I know in a situation like this - cheating for the first time - that there is going to be a great amount of small talk. And I know that in reality it would be mostly boring. But it's not supposed to be that way in theater. (Posted on Aug. 6)



"Great duo" by Sandra Mason:

Interesting show about cheating and the difficulties it brings. Wasn't sure what to expect and was not disappointed. It slowed a little for me towards the end but overall it was good! (Posted on Aug. 13)



"I was waiting to learn." by Tim Johnson:

For the most part the play was great. Good directing, dialogue funny at times and the acting was up to par. When you use a title "HOW TO CHEAT," I guess I was miss lead. I was expecting a journey on the many facets of cheating, not how two people have a one-night stand at a dinner party. My biggest beef is the playwright used a device to break the 4th wall at one point and talk to the audience. This can work but when it happened one time in this play it seemed kind of preachy and out of nowhere. Also I felt the playwright had a bunch of ideas he did not know what to do with and did a "best of." I do not know if this was intended to be a full-length play or a short but the play ended abruptly. The card sex scene was the best part of the play. (Posted on Aug. 5)



"Left Behind" by Patrick Pfundstein:

The 3 stars for this one are for the outstanding directing and acting, some sharp writing, and also for the fact that most of the audience was on for the ride, but this one left me on the outside looking in at a couple making out. Is it because as a divorced person (no adultery involved), and the child of a divorced couple I'm too cognizant of the aftermath implications to go along for the romp? Is it the lack of sympathetic characters (well-off and good looking and and stem cells?!)? Maybe it was the weak moral relativism. (You have to do it before you can judge it? Really?) Whatever... (Posted on Aug. 7)