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'Lentil' offers welcome return

Written by Paul Wozniak

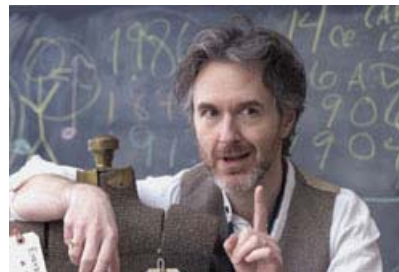
Tuesday, 22 May 2007

For the final production of the season, Boarshead Theater has chosen to take the audience on an unusual and extraordinary trip with "Underneath the Lintel." The latest theatrical gem from Boarshead, "Lintel" is filled with humor and philosophical ponderings as deep as the purpose of life.

The one-man show was written by Glen Berger and is directed by Boarshead Theater Artistic Director Kristine Thatcher.

Michael J. Mitchell returns to the Boarshead stage to star as the Librarian, a socially stunted and rule-bent man presenting an extremely important, one-time lecture. Those who saw Mitchell last in "Holiday Memories" should remember him for his subtle southern accent, but the origins of this character require Mitchell to don a Dutch inflection.

Mitchell introduces his character as a humorous caricature of a man who takes things too seriously. The Librarian shows off his date-stamper, the one item he took with him from the library. It's a device he says "contains all the dates in history." This remark and many others seem laughable until one realizes that they are simply there to set up the rest of the plot.



One man on a mission: Michael Joseph Mitchell stars in Boarshead Theater's "Underneath the Lintel." (Courtesy photo)

The Librarian was once in charge of checking in books from the overnight bin. If the book was overdue, the person was to take it to the desk so they could pay their fine. In this particular instance, a book was returned in the overnight slot that had been checked out more than 100 years prior.

Furious that the individual did not come to the desk to pay their fine, the Librarian set out on a personal quest to find the violator, but ends up discovering so much more. After extensive absences from his job, he was eventually fired, leading to this singular educational event.

The man he seeks proves to be very difficult to track, as the Librarian is only able to piece together bits of "evidence" to prove the man's physical existence. The displays of "evidence" and references to a mythological being cause deeper ideas to surface as the Librarian struggles with questions about the purpose of his own life. By the end, both the Librarian and the show have transformed into something completely different than either he or the audience ever expected, yet all of the pieces were set up from the beginning.

The stage is set to look like a forgotten basement storage room in an old university building, complete with leaky pipes overhead. There are ladders and unused stage lights in the background, all with their eventual purpose plotted. The theater is filled with a light fog to hint at the cold dampness that fills the room. The stage lights remain expertly hidden, and their use is mainly subliminal through most of the show.

But it is Mitchell's amazing performance that carries this show. His ability to command the stage for over an hour is in itself a feat, not to mention his physical and emotional transformation onstage that develops almost invisibly. His accent remains consistent and his skills at memorization are enviable, but these are trivial points next to his charisma and charm. "Underneath the Lintel" is a time-twisting, destiny-projecting adventure that would feel overcrowded with more than one person onstage. In the hands of any other actor, it would feel too thin.

"Underneath the Lintel"
Boarshead Theater
Through June 10
7 p.m. Wednesday & Thursday
8 p.m. Friday & Saturday

[free tickets](#)

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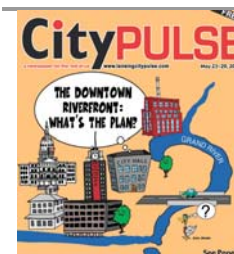
5:30 p.m. on **The Jack Ebling Show** on WILS 1320-AM.

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Calendar

May 2007						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4 5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
+ Post New Event						

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