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Dying City



Synopsis

“The finest new American play I’ve seen in a long while . . . Dying City is a political play and also a psychodrama about what Arthur Miller called the politics of the soul. It’s about public conscience and private grief, and real and symbolic catastrophes.” —The New York Observer
“Anyone who doubts that Mr. Shinn is among the most provocative and probing of American playwrights today need only experience the . . . sophisticated welding of form and content that is Dying City.” —The New York Times
In Christopher Shinn’s new play Dying City, a young therapist, Kelly, whose husband Craig was killed while on military duty in Iraq, is confronted a year later by his identical twin Peter, who suspects that Craig’s death was not accidental. Set in a spare downtown-Manhattan apartment after dark, scenes shift from the confrontation between Peter and Kelly, to Kelly’s complicated farewell with her husband Craig. Shinn’s creepy, sophisticated drama “infused with references to 9/11 and the war in Iraq” explores how contemporary politics and recent history have transformed the lives of these three characters. Christopher Shinn was born in Hartford, Connecticut, and lives in New York. His plays include Where Do We Live, Other People, What Didn’t Happen, and On the Mountain, which have been widely produced in New York, across the United States, and in London. He is the recipient of an OBIE Award in Playwriting, as well as the Robert S. Chesney Award. He teaches playwriting at The New School for Drama.

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Customer Reviews

Shinn, a playwright completely unknown to me before seeing his name pop up on the 'Pulitzer Prize for Drama' Wikipedia page, writes with a keen ear for natural dialogue. His characters are clumsy with their words, which, yes, makes for a tougher and possibly more frustrating read. But when one goes the extra mile to read the dialogue as though it was being spoken by a person on a stage, you really do get a sense of how well crafted this play is. A deserving Pulitzer finalist. Having twins played by the same actor really puts an emphasis on how minimal the play is as a whole, with hardly any (written) light or sound changes throughout the production. He also keeps stage direction very minimal, choosing to focus on the words and not the physical actions of each character. One of the better plays I've read--very easy, very simple, and yet touching, painful. Shinn has all the workings of a great dramatist; *Dying City* is step number one.

I loved it. Absolutely enjoyed reading it, even though it was for a project, I actually enjoyed reading this. I definitely recommend it.

Subtle and honest. Two great roles. Fairly easy production values.

I thought that this play was defiantly worth the read. Its a bit choppy at times but Mr. Shinn defiantly captures the awkwardness and suffering in this play. If you like older plays like Tennessee Williams and August Wilson you will like *Dying City*. It is a sad play and the playwright meant for it to be. Its not fluffy and light. the more you read and study it the more it will grow on you. Don't just read it for the sake of reading something. Read it with the idea to study a good and challenging piece of theatre

As I am writing my thesis about Pulitzer Prize winning drama, I am reading a lot of modern American Drama, mostly PP winners and nominees. "*Dying City*" has truly become one of my contemporary favorites. The play is simple, yet compelling, dealing with grief and the loss of love on many different levels. I can highly recommend it to theater groups as a new production and feel it is

a great example of writing that is actually meant for the stage and does not hope to be turned into a movie...

I saw this play and then read it to see if I missed something. For some reason, this new style of play is being embraced, most likely because there is nothing better coming out in the old style. The plot involves a woman whose husband served in Iraq and his twin brother, obviously we are supposed to be intrigued by the duality of the male character, or least how fast the costume changes can take place. Unfortunately, there is very little plot, the characters drone on about issues and incidents that are patched together randomly and that have no significance nor bearing on real life. Yes, yes...Iraq affected us all, lives were ruined, blah, blah, blah...this play has so little to say about it and is so lacking in originality you wonder if the author's Uncle is a Broadway producer. The characters are not likable and the whole experience of watching the play is like visiting the dysfunctional family next door and being forced to watch their family dynamics for almost two hours. You wouldn't do that would you? So why would you PAY to do that? If this is the future of play writing and Pulitzer nominations (you heard me) than Broadway might as well shut down...or stick to juke-box musicals.

The only conceivable excuse for a play this poor is that it is part of some new "style" that no one told me about. I am perhaps picking up on a new style with recently published plays that seem to fall under the heading of "instant messaging" plays. They are not labeled as such, perhaps, I am ahead of our theatrical historians? Even if it is a new style, this play is really bad. The "construct" had potential. Identical twins played by the same actor in two different times might could have been a wonderful tool to explore miscommunication and the different perceptions of identical events. Instead, the author (not playwright) seems to have lost interest in their own work half way through and the play just introduced more than it ever dared to close up or even flesh out. I could write a review much longer than the play on how bad this play was, but I will not.

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