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A *CurtainUp* Review

The Penetration Play

By [Jenny Sandman](#)

You never know what you'll find in our living room after midnight ---Maggie,



Mandy Siegfried & Mia Barron
 (Photo: Carol Rosegg)

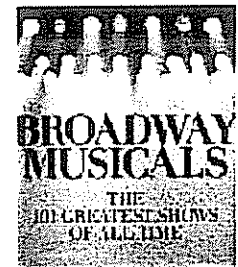
As you might guess, *The Penetration Play* is about lesbians. No, wait. It's about a lesbian, her straight friend Ashley, and Ashley's straight mom. No, wait.

Rain and Ashley are twenty-something best friends, somewhere in the wilds of New York suburbia. Rain is the lesbian. She's rather obviously, if cynically, in love with Ashley who encourages the soupcon of sexual tension in their relationship. Ashley not only jokes with Rain about both their sex lives but allows arguments to degenerate into sweaty wrestling matches on the living room

floor (pillow fight, anyone?). Generally though Ashley is clueless about Rain's true feelings. Enter Ashley's mom Maggie. After a drunken night out, Rain comes home to find Maggie in a talkative mood. She's bored with her marriage and trots out a bottle of wine for girl talk. And you may think you know what happens after that, but really, you don't.

This is a witty, bitterly mocking play about the desperation of unrequited love, and about that most recognizable of lesbians -- the one who always falls for the straight chick. Playwright Winter Miller has written a tight, carefully structured script. She has parlayed her ear for banter into a quickly-paced, surprisingly active play, that is, active for a play that involves three people talking.

At play's end we see Rain's world closing in on her and we feel her claustrophobic itch to escape and we also identify with



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Ashley's confusion and her mother's strange resignation.

Mandy Siegfried (most recently in Adam Rapp's *Blackbird*) is perfect as Rain. Sardonic and clever, if brusque, she knows her situation is doomed, but she's smart enough to see some sour humor in it. She's like a character from an ancient Greek tragedy, bound by her inevitable fate and powerless to stop it. Kathryn Grody as Maggie is warm and voluble, everyone's favorite mother, but obviously feeling the strain of her decaying marriage. Mia Barron's Ashley is happily oblivious to both Rain and her mother, steadfastly ignoring the misery right in front of her. Siegfried and Barrow have a great chemistry, full of sexual tension and delayed recognition.

Josh Hecht's direction gets at the underlying relationships and keeps things moving. He effectively has Rain and Ashley circling each other and keep the boundaries of their friendship blurred. Robin Vest's set is pleasantly innocuous, the embodiment of every bland suburban living room.

While watching unrequited lesbian love may not be everyone's cup of tea, there's nothing to offend even conservative viewers. Love, no matter who's involved, is never easy -- more so when it never had a chance in the first place.

This is a strong, well-thought-out production. The characters are interesting, the dialogue is crisp, and the actors are outstanding. What more could you need in a new play?

THE PENETRATION PLAY

By Winter Miller

Directed by Josh Hecht

With Mandy Siegfried, Mia Barron and Kathryn Grody

Lighting Design by Paul Whitaker

Set Design by Robin Vest

Sound Design by Eric Shim

Running time: 80 minutes with no intermission

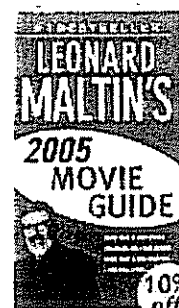
13P at Mint Space, 311 West 43rd Street; 212-868-4444

11/20/04 through 12/11/04; opening 11/22/04

Thursdays through Mondays at 8 PM.

All tickets \$15.

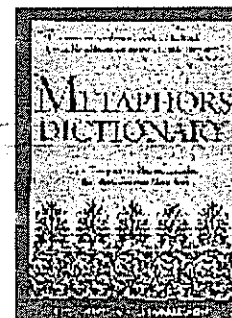
Reviewed by Jenny Sandman based on November 21st performance



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