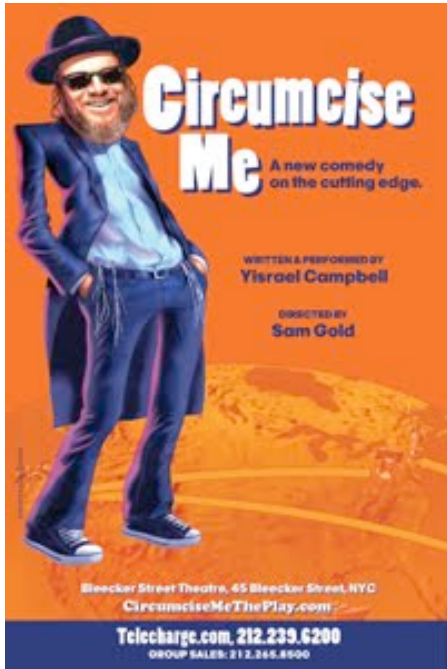


HD in Effect

November 30, 2009

Theatrical Review: Circumcise Me

Hannington Dia



Unusual name set aside, *Circumcise Me*, a one-person play directed by Sam Gold and starring writer Yisrael Campbell, is a rip-roaring adventure of a Catholic man's real-life quest to become Jewish...by any means necessary. Playing at the Bleecker Street Theater, the story behind *Circumcise Me* starts off in Philadelphia. Born Christopher Campbell, the son of a "manic Italian mother and depressingly silent Irishman" has fallen victim to alcoholism at a young age, indulging in Vodka, cheap liquor and whatever else he and his friends can get their hands on.

After causing some embarrassing accidents while drunk (crashing his mother's car into a priest's at sixteen, for one) Campbell decides to travel on the path to spiritual recovery by converting to Judaism, no easy feat for a guy not born to a Jewish mother. Campbell must deal with crazed Rabbis, a job in Los Angeles selling toner and (you guessed it) circumcision during his journey.

Campbell's delivery is what drives the play. It becomes readily apparent from the first few moments of his dialogue that the man was born to entertain. He started off cracking inside jokes aimed at the Jewish audience, then smoothly transitioned into his life story.

Campbell also adds personal touches to his tale. When he went into how his friends were killed in a bombing in Israel, he slowed down his voice enough so your heart fell with him, where you truly felt his sorrow. He continued the mood, covering his father's death from terminal illness, before finally bringing us back to a happy place, culminating with the birth of his two twins in July 2004 and the acceptance he had been seeking for fifteen years. Campbell had crowd control unlike many actors tasked with carrying a production by themselves.

Circumcise Me is an inspiring work, one that says that even you can overcome the vices that have held you back in life to find what you've really been looking for. Campbell is worthy of the comedic storytelling title. He kept the energy fresh, never missing a beat and carried the audience through his highs and lows. An amazing theatrical debut from start to end. If you're looking for a way to kill your Saturday afternoon, please, please, see *Circumcise Me*.

Bleecker Street Theater

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Tickets: 212-239-6200

