

Ally's father (Andrew Dice Clay), and the smooth Svengali (Rafi Gavron) who guides her rising career. To follow the example of Judy Garland and Barbra Streisand requires nerve, but Lady Gaga takes possession of the movie, and her singing sets it ablaze.—*A.L. (10/8/18)* (In wide release.)

The Waldheim Waltz

The Austrian filmmaker Ruth Beckermann takes a distinctive approach to this historical documentary about Kurt Waldheim, the former U.N. Secretary-General, who ran for the Presidency of Austria in 1986. During the campaign, Waldheim was found to have concealed his activities as an officer in the Second World War, which placed him in close proximity to—and possibly in an administrative role in—massacres of Jews and resistance fighters. Beckermann narrates the documentary in the first person, and is also a participant: she took part in local protests against Waldheim at the time, and videotaped them, using early-generation equipment. The movie is constructed entirely of a remarkable array of archival footage, including Beckermann's recordings, that spotlights unresolved national traumas and unabated anti-Semitism. Several journalists perform keen off-the-cuff political analyses; several Austrian politicians bravely defy local orthodoxies; and free, frank hearings in the United States Congress add a painful element of nostalgia.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

THE THEATRE

Girl from the North Country Public

This musical, written and directed by Conor McPherson, takes its name, and its music, from Bob Dylan's catalogue. In Depression-era Duluth, Minnesota, Nick Laine (Stephen Bogardus), the owner of a boarding house, is buried in debt; his wife, Elizabeth, played in a livid slapstick by Mare Winningham, has settled into a half-awake state of dementia. As in much of Dylan's music, racial adjacency is a theme—Nick and Elizabeth are white, but their pregnant daughter, Marianne (Kimber Sprawl), is black, and Nick is fooling around with a black boarder, Mrs. Neilsen (Jeannette Bayardelle). The fragmented plot, performed by a teeming, sketched-out ensemble of woeful souls, seems like a series of vignettes meant to hold you over until the music starts again. McPherson offers up plenty of people—probably too many—but never a voice, or a mind, like Dylan's: the kind that fits history through the needle's eye of the self. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/15/18.)—*Vinson Cunningham (Through Dec. 23.)*

Goodbody 59E59

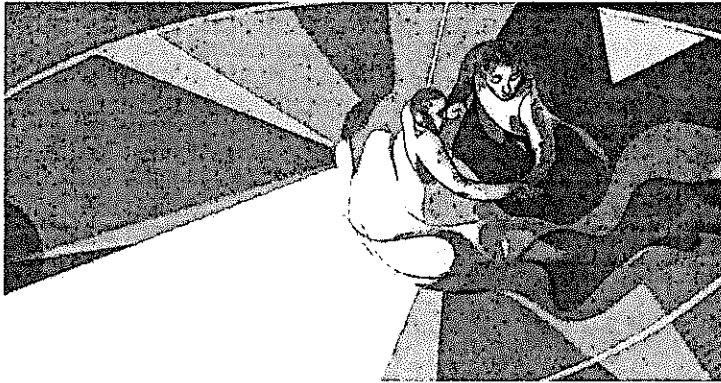
A gunshot, and the lights go up on J. C. Ernst's new play, directed by Melissa Firlit for the

Crook company. Marla (Amanda Sykes) coolly holds the pistol, while Spencer (Raife Baker) sits terrified, bloody, and bandaged in duct tape. It becomes clear right away, though, that Marla doesn't know what has just happened—she doesn't remember the shot, how the two of them came to be there, or even who the guy is. So this longish one-act becomes an exercise in extensive exposition, as information is slowly dispensed amid uncertainty, manipulation, menace, and shifting power. There is some violent action, as a couple of other characters, played by Alex Morf and Dustin Charles, make their way to this deserted barn upstate, where every farm tool is a potential weapon. But mostly it's profane, not very shocking talk, drawing on the styles of Martin McDonagh and Quentin Tarantino, but without enough of their crazy intelligence, macabre humor, or insight into human nature to put it over the top.—*Ken Marks (Through Nov. 4.)*

Kurt Vonnegut's Mother Night 59E59

Kurt Vonnegut's 1961 novel, "Mother Night," opens with one Howard W. Campbell, Jr., awaiting trial in a Jerusalem jail. Unbeknownst to his captors, Campbell is not the Nazi criminal they think he is but an American mole pretending to be one in the service of a higher cause. Brian Katz's adaptation for the stage allows for some creative license, but the late satirist's humor and humanity are present throughout. With Gabriel Grilli in the lead, a cast of seven plays upward of thirty memorable characters, from New York art critics to Soviet spies. At one point, it dawns on Campbell that "we are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." The Custom Made Theatre Company has pulled off a cautionary morality tale, in true Vonnegutian style, as droll as it is dark.—*David Kortava (Through Nov. 3.)*

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE



The performer, writer, and theatre artist Kaneza Schaal is a downtown denizen par excellence. It doesn't take long to start recognizing her calm, intelligent gaze in conceptual dramas and cerebral musicals—she is perhaps best known for her work with Elevator Repair Service. Two years ago, I saw her in Jackie Sibbles Drury's "Really," and marvelled at how her every insouciant gesture served both to convey and to mask the emotion at the heart of Drury's consideration of visual art and personal pain. Schaal's own works, like "Go Forth," from 2016, are experimental, deftly collaged meditations on history, race, and the movements of individual bodies and entire populations. Now, at BAM Fisher, Oct. 17-20, she presents "**Jack &**" the story of a man, Jack, and his wife, Jill, who, through their own bitter specifics and the folkloric archetypes implied by their names, explore what it means to be free after living in prison.—*Vinson Cunningham*

Midnight at the Never Get Theatre at St. Peter's

In this smart, well-crafted new musical, as we watch Trevor (Sam Bolen) reminisce about his relationship with Arthur (Jeremy Cohen, who also plays piano in the onstage band), we gradually realize that he may not be the most reliable narrator. A boyish, handsome singer, Trevor met the budding songwriter Arthur in the cabaret scene of the early nineteen-sixties. The pair fell in love and spent most of the decade honing an act in which they refused to change any male pronouns to female ones. The period-perfect score, by Mark Sonnenblick (who also wrote the book), sounds as if it consists of deep cuts from obscure LPs by Bing Crosby and Peggy Lee—the very funny "My Boy in Blue" is a highlight. Directed with stylish economy by Max Friedman, for the York Theatre Company, the show overcomes its obvious cabaret origins to slowly reveal a sly, unexpectedly subversive side.—*Elisabeth Vincentelli (Through Nov. 4.)*

Popcorn Falls Davenport

Hard times have hit Popcorn Falls, and to save his city the new mayor must create a theatre company and put on a play in just a week so he can reap big, fat arts subsidies. (Yes, this is fiction.) The townspeople rally with an enthusiasm

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