

REVIEW: WHO KILLED SPALDING GRAY? – LUMINATO

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Who Killed Spalding Gray, on stage in Toronto, serves as an example of how to pull off a one-person show

I thought that I was going to be too late to see [Daniel MacIvor's Who Killed Spalding Gray](#), one of the [Seven Monologues](#) that are part of this year's [Luminato Festival](#).

Streetcars were not cooperating and I made it to Harbourfront Centre Theatre at 5:48 for a 5:45 show. The doors were already closed but I heard someone say "You can seat people until the house lights go down."

Thank goodness, otherwise I would have missed a terrific show!

MacIvor opened the show by asking a man from the audience to join him on stage. He didn't ask for volunteers; he chose someone. I wonder what it was that made him choose that particular man; he was very comfortable on stage but I don't think he was planted in the audience.

MacIvor explained that he was going to ask him three questions and said that they would chat a bit about the answers.

The third question was "Who is [Spalding Gray](#)?" It was a clever question. MacIvor talked a bit about Gray and provided the back story, helpful for people who didn't know much about Gray.

Not that this is really a show about Spalding Gray.

MacIvor has written a memoir about what was happening in his own life when Spalding Gray died. It's also about Howard, a man who's tired of living. The three stories weave around each other, go off on tangents, and then come back together. [Helena Bonham Carter](#) makes a couple of appearances.

The stories are a bit funny, a bit sad, a bit other-worldly, maybe true, maybe not. It doesn't matter.

This was the first time that I had seen MacIvor on stage. He's relaxed and natural (or acts as if he is) and it felt like I was listening to a friend. I love that. His humour is self-deprecating, something else that I love.

And he's kind. Kind to himself, to Spalding Gray, and to Howard. Not in a sappy way, but more in a not-judging way. Accepting that life is what it is. Except for theatre reviewers—not so kind about us. But I guess we aren't always kind about him.

The set is plain, a wooden table with a microphone and a glass of water, and a chair. There may have been a notebook on the table, I can't remember. It's pretty much the same set-up that Spalding Gray used.

The difference is that Gray sat at the table when he performed his monologues. MacIvor uses the whole stage. He actually seemed a bit uncomfortable when he was just sitting at the table. It never felt as if he was moving for the sake of moving.

Great direction from [Daniel Brooks](#), and a lesson for people who write and perform a one-person show and think they don't need a director because it's their story. The whole performance could be a lesson for people planning on writing and performing one-person autobiographical monologues.

My only quibble? It went so fast! It took me a couple of seconds to realize that it had ended; it didn't feel like 90 minutes.

As I was leaving the woman next to me said, "That was amazing, it was fantastic." And it was.

Thank you Daniel MacIvor for the most enjoyable 90 minutes of theatre that I've experienced in a while. You made my weekend!