

LOOT

By Wenzel Jones

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One so rarely sees cunnilingus integrated into a curtain call that it's difficult to tell if it's always an option and few directors think of it, or if it only appears to be the appropriate conclusion due to director Darin Anthony's approach to Joe Orton's amoral little [comedy](#) about greed, self-interest, and the folly of placing one's trust in municipal authority. Never could Anthony be accused of somehow dulling Orton's wit. If anything, he takes the barb and beats it around so it not only stings, it's dirty.

Joel Daavid has worked his usual set-design miracle of fitting a living room neatly into a walk-in closet and has scattered so much religious iconography into the space that it would appear that the corpse in the center of the room may have died from the sheer weight of her pieties. It is the widower McLeavy (a solid John-David Keller), though, who has the weakness for Catholic kitsch and who serves as the befuddled moral center of the play around whom an increasingly vicious collection of characters orbits. Fay, the suddenly unemployed home-care nurse with a history of [wedding](#) rich widowers who die shortly thereafter, is nicely played by Sile Birmingham, who deftly delivers sex, starch, or Jesus in proper amounts. McLeavy's errant albeit honest son, Hal (Brian Foyster), conspires with his friend Dennis (Nero Smeraldo) to seclude the eponymous loot from a recent heist? a plan that involves a great deal of faith in the preservative qualities of formaldehyde. When an ostensible employee of the Metropolitan Water Board, Truscott (Rob Nagle), drops by to nose around, the game is afoot. Nagle handily embodies Orton's contempt for authority figures, while Foyster has an almost elfin quality about him that makes us buy the character of an incorrigible crook who is unable to lie. Smeraldo is a bit of a problem, though, as his delivery is high and histrionic. Add in the regional British accent and he's often indecipherable. Save for the middle of the second act, where Anthony should probably turn down the heat once in a while, the piece plays out nicely. As for the bit of sodomy at the end, it may well be the only act approximating warmth in the entire evening.

"Loot," presented by Theatre East in association with the Lily Tomlin Jane [Wagner](#) Cultural Arts Center at Theatre East, 6760 Lexington Ave., Hollywood. Fri.-Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 7 p.m. Sep. 2-Oct. 2. \$20. (323) 957-5782.