

LA WEEKLY - 10/29/2008

GO U.S. DRAG “I want a lot. What do we have to do to get a lot?” says Angela (Megan Goodchild) to her best friend, Allison (Katie Davies), as the pair traverse Manhattan in search of ... a lot, in this West Coast premiere of Gina Gionfriddo’s scintillating comedy. Angela’s every perky/snide conversation is punctuated by the monetary value to be derived from it, whether speaking to an employer or partner. The two smart young women are not smart enough to be rich, and money seems to be the play’s driving force, accompanied by a triptych of fears — fear of loneliness, fear of squandered opportunities (such as fame) and fear of physical attack. Within this cosmopolitan universe, Gionfriddo populates her play with sundry support groups — one led by Evan (Noah Harpster) counsels its members to refuse to help anybody in order to avoid attack — a Wall Street neurotic (Nick Cernoch), a would-be literati (Shawn Lee), and a “helper” (Eric Pargac) with a deranged compulsion to track down and give baked goods and the like to victims of any urban trauma. Gionfriddo’s snappy dialogue is both urban and urbane, reflecting cultural values that have clearly gone off the tracks. Among the play’s delightful conceits is its open question of whether the fears we shape our lives around are actually real, or our own speculative inventions. Darin Anthony’s very slick staging includes riffs of techno pop (original music by Doug Newell) and a set/lighting design by Dan Jenkins that cements the play’s matrix of consumerism and death with boutique windows and streetlife — one character actually arrives on a slab withdrawn from a gutter. The performances are mostly excellent, with a glorious cameo by Johanna McKay as a befuddled attack victim, though some mumbled lines and aimless movement don’t quite match the director’s mat-knife precision. Pasadena Playhouse, Carrie Hamilton Theatre, 39 S. El Molino Ave., Pasadena; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7:30 p.m.; through Nov. 22. A Furious Theatre Company production. (Steven Leigh Morris)