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This Week's Reviews**REVIEWS****THEATER**

ADAPTATION
Aimee Whelan and
Lauren
Roth in *Billy Carver and
the Children in Mind*
(photo: Kelsey Bennett).

**Billy Carver and
the Children in Mind**

Written and directed by Montserrat Mendez
Manhattan Theatre Source
177 MacDougal Street
212-260-4698

Review by Juliana Appenrodt

Diaphanous. The word is defined countless times throughout the play, yet somehow, at the end, we are still not sure exactly what it means. This is similar to the effect Montserrat Mendez's *Billy Carver and the Children in Mind* has on us — but in a thought-provoking, fantastic way. The play's story is left open-ended and unresolved, but everything that happens in between its opening and closing scenes, both of which involve cars landing in a swimming pool, is ridiculous, hilarious and extremely relevant

at a time when the film industry is ruled by Harry Potter and the blood-sucking vampires of *Twilight*.

Joannie Roman Redd (Jenny D. Green), the play's fictional London writer has created her own fang-toothed protagonist, and reviewers of her latest novel believe that, like Edward Cullen, the werewolf known as Billy Carver would make a great on-screen character. As Joannie decides whether to take her hairy, howling creation to the big screen or to kill him off in her next book, she brings her sister, assistant, boyfriend, ex-husband and a couple of actors hoping to star in her movies along for a dramatic, endlessly amusing ride.

Nearly half of the dramatics are provided by Priscilla Margot Saunders (Lauren Roth), and rightfully so — she did, after all, win a BAFTA award as a child actor (Saunders, that is, not Roth). Like her character, however, Roth is deserving of an award for her hysterical performance as the sell-out actress who, by the end of the play, has had an affair with both Joannie and her sister, and enough drinks for the entire cast. Green is also brilliant as the love-starved novelist who seems to be able to get herself out of any difficult situation with a little wordplay, which, as the script reveals, appears to be Mendez's specialty as well.

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But, as the playbill reads, "...life's about more than wordplay..." and so is the production. Alongside Roth and Green, the other five cast members are perfect in their respective roles. It may have helped that Mendez wrote each of the characters specifically for the actors, but their undeniable comedic timing and chemistry with one another is a work of their own. And because the set is so intimate, it is almost as if we become part of Joannie's "pack of wolves" — her entourage that watches all of the emotional ups and downs of being a writer play out in her apartment, her beloved typewriter acting as a centerpiece for it all.

The rush that went into Mendez's desperate, three-day writing of the play can almost be felt in its performance, as some of the lines are delivered a bit too hastily, but the confusion that ensues is all part of the fun. Born only after Mendez was denied rights to direct both Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* and Alan Ayckbourn's *Woman in Mind* (hence the title), *Billy Carver and the Children in Mind* is a unique and hilarious piece of serendipity