



## MAKING LOVE OVER THERE

by Noah J Nelson, June 22, 2012 / *Turnstyle*

Zoë Chao and Patrick Riley give bravura performances in *Making Love Over There*, a series of vignettes on the theme of Love. Writer-Director Tom Dugdale takes his cast and the audience on a hyper-kinetic journey that— while lacking in any real narrative structure— reaches emotional heights with the skill of a well made mix-tape. The songs may not even all be in the same language, but they sure as hell feel right.

The inherent theatricality of the show is apparent from the moment the audience steps into the small Asylum Lab space, with Chao and Riley shivering on stage in layers of winter clothes that are better suited to a Russian Arctic outpost than a performance space in the heart of Hollywood. A super-title with the legend “PROLOGUE” projected on black scrim at the top of the back wall of the stage.

When the house lights are finally down the pair ramp up their shivering until they erupt with passion, clothes flying in a desperate comic quest for connection. It’s a perfect theatre moment, perfectly performed.

The tone of the performances trend toward the theatrical, even when a given scene might be better suited by a more naturalistic approach. However Dugdale calls upon his actors to play through a wide swath of styles and at every juncture the duo is up to the task. The only time when the hour drags is during a few extended costume changes, but those pauses act more as tension builders than as punctures in pacing. There is almost a palpable desire on the part of the audience to see what comes next.

No one in either the program or the press notes takes credit for the lighting design, which is a shame as this is the most sculpted and precise use of that particular theatrical technology I've seen at the Fringe this year outside of the shadow-play in *Four Clowns: That Beautiful Laugh*. The Lonesome No More! Theatre is bringing their A-game to this production. Thematically driven plays can drag if they become too monotone or flounder if they become too schizophrenic as they shift gears. Dugdale and company pilot through that particular Scylla and Charybdis with masterful skill, the siren song of mad love drawing players and audience on ever forward.

I do wish, slightly, that Dugdale had brought a bit more of a meta-narrative structure to the proceedings. Constructing a concept album instead of just a mix-tape. Yet as an investment pure theatrical experience the moment to moment joy I derived from *Making Love Over There* was time paid back with ample interest.