



## Arnott of the Arts

### The Pamela Precious Rave

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You read it here first: Matt Moses has written the first great comedy of the Obama era. On the surface, this extravagantly grotesque bit of social satire may be obsessed with sharp jabs to the crotch but in fact it is a sustained, substantial musing on the American capacity to change. Or not change. Or pretend to want to change but not really. Seriously, this is a profound bout of nut-twisting nonsense with contemporary bite, hopped up on the hopelessness of Hope. Ostensibly it's a love triangle gone horribly, hilariously wrong, but subtextually and psychologically it's startlingly true to the violent yet intellectual Jacobean theater influence cited in the program notes. The Yale Cabaret has offered gratuitous Grand Guignol gross-outs in the past, not to mention works about disturbed loners and their troubling thoughts. This is grander than those. It's about the dark side of relating to lovers, friends, new challenges and inner demon such as greed, jealousy and acute cynicism.

*Pamela Precious—A Balls Out Love Story* concludes its brief spurt of performances Saturday, but deserves to be erected anew. It has staying power. Moses ended up playing the most villainous part—a beady-eyed "life science" teacher at Jacob Riis High School (the name is unexplained in the script, but resonates as an extra joke to those of us who recognize Riis as the 19th century social reformer who embraced new technologies and radical methods to tackle societal decay). Moses might as well have called it Michael McClure High, since he's emblazoned a blackboard with a slogan that sounds right out of that poet/playwright's canon: "You are a machine made of meat." Like McClure (who upbraided the Love Generation with such outrageous affronts as *Gorf* and *The Beard*), Moses sees horror and hipocrisy in an age that wants to see itself as enlightened, peaceful and committed. *Pamela Precious* is a long, gonad-centered battle of wills. It paints with broad strokes, and is relentlessly foul, but make no mistake about its metaphorical power and its genuine satiric edge.

At the performance I saw, someone in the audience fainted. Whether it was due to the onstage quasi-castration scene or some other factor, I'm not sure. But it was significant that it took the rest of the audience no time at all to recover from this dismaying disruption and get right back to laughing at *Pamela Precious'* audacious balls.

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