



On TARGET

BY JAY WEITZ

When you name your series *Theatre Roulette*, you invite such extensions of the metaphor as "shooting blanks." In this eighth edition of the MadLab Theatre festival of short plays, though, there are fewer misfires than might be expected, at least in the two ("Flashbacks" and "Foolishness") of the three rotating evenings that I've been able to catch.

"Flashbacks" begins with the longest and least successful of its four plays. Bonnie Lake's "The Cat in her Head" is the lament of a daughter (Sara Brunet) for her slowly fading mother (Randi Morgan). In stressing the fade itself rather than dramatizing what exactly has faded, Lake intends poignancy but achieves only cheap melodrama.

The evening improves from there. Ry Herman and Kolby Granville's "Child's Play" affords a clever little girl's perspective on coping with grief through her dolls.

Mark Harvey Levine's "Saver" builds from the obvious symbol of an old man's suitcase full of memorabilia to a multilayered meditation on savoring each moment. Surely, the subtle pun of the title is intentional.

There's nothing subtle about Alex Dremmen's "On the Porch One Crisp Spring Morning," except for how delightfully it develops from a simple mother-daughter tête-à-tête into an impossibly complex spy-versus-spy game of can-you-top-this. Lethally funny.

The "Foolishness" evening is aptly named, but mostly in a good way. Nicole Greevy, Uma Inrocci and Erica Jensen's "Impulsive" gets out of hand and degenerates from an exploration of the human need for spontaneity into a literal food fight.

Tom Hoefner's "Family Portrait" is a wacky glimpse into the lives of the rich.

"The Inciting Incident" by Mark Cornell is an insanely intense monologue featuring Jon Osbeck as a paranoid writer who reads menace into the most mundane happenstance.

"Hush Little Baby" by Montserrat Mendez follows two new parents (Melissa Bair and Stephen Woosley) with serious second thoughts about having brought a child into this world.

Also in rotation with these two evenings is *Theatre Roulette's* third evening of shorts, "Foreshadows": Jim Azelvandre's "The Apple," Crystal Jackson's "Please Remove this Stuffed Animal from my Head" and Terence Anthony's "Tangled."

If "Flashbacks" and "Foolishness" are any indication, "Foreshadows" portends equal gratification.

"THEATRE ROULETTE"

WHEN: Through May 26
WHERE: MadLab Theatre,
Downtown
WEB: madlab.net