

## BWW Special Feature: 99 and Under the Radar; A 'Neo Futurist' Twist on Horror...

by Michael Roderick



**Welcome to 99 AND UNDER THE RADAR: A LOOK AT INDIE THEATER'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS, BroadwayWorld's new weekly series that showcases standout productions and production companies from the independent theater scene in New York City. Each week, independent producer Michael Roderick will be discussing the latest goings on in the theatrical wings, highlighting those with potentially bright futures.**

This Week's Topic: A "Neo Futurist" twist on Horror, A great way to spend a "Weekend", and "Following" someone down

Often during the last week in October everyone in the city is searching for a great Haunted House or some other Halloween experience. They usually pay a good amount of money depending the reputation of the Haunted House and spend about 15 minutes to an hour being scared. For about the same price that one would pay for one ticket for this experience, the Indie scene is offering a variety of incredible offerings. The first of which even fits in the horror genre... somewhat.

The [Ny Neo Futurists](#) latest piece [\(Un\)Afraid](#) comes complete with a dark hallway leading the audience to an even darker space where costumed "minions" show everyone where to sit, yet this is not the traditional scary story. This piece goes much deeper than that and turns the idea of what people fear on its head. The brilliance of this work is that no two shows will ever be the same. Why? Because each member of this talented and versatile cast has crafted their own tale and a spirit guide decides the order at each performance. This is in no way a new convention, but the complexity of each of the stories turns this into a much more psychological exploration of the things that we fear rather than just a series of scary tales meant to give us goosebumps. It could be argued however that the topics that the Neos tackle are perhaps the scariest of all. In one evening there are bold political statements, social commentary, satire, and audience participation that is positively unnerving. Written and performed by [Jill Beckman](#), [Cara Francis](#), [Ricardo Gamboa](#), and Daniel McCoy this work forces the audience to face the things each of these individuals have faced and sometimes brings them on stage to do so. It's hard to define the feeling that a show like this creates with comical monologues that suddenly turn into truly frightening moments, but one thing is certain: It's worth it to take the \$50-\$100 that anyone would spend on a walk through a Haunted House and go and see this show more than once. There really is a nightmare for everyone. Tickets can be found [here](#).



On a completely opposite note, the [Ateh Theater Group](#) is currently performing a piece that is an achievement in comedic timing, acting, directing, and writing. Those looking to have a great time and to see a new play that will most likely end up on the same shelf as Present

Laughter and Noises Off in a few years, should make sure to get down to the Access Theatre to see "[Weekend at an English Country Estate](#)." It is incredibly rare to find a piece that is so well constructed that it becomes a showcase for every single actor in the cast, but this show does that and then some. With carefully timed entrances and exits, dramatic irony, and bombastic characters this show takes off and does not let up until the bang up finale of the first act. The audience then gets right back on the roller coaster for a second act that is just as exciting and ties up beautifully. Sara Montgomery's script is a piece of writing that is classic. Set in the 1930's the story revolves around a recently separated well to do couple who have each taken their younger fling to the estate for the weekend. They arrive thinking they will be alone and discover one another. The cast of characters that explode out of this simple beginning are hilarious. From a depressed poet, to an acerbic butler, to a bookish young girl with a wild side the wackiness does not stop. To say much more would ruin the discovery of each new plot point which Montgomery layers so beautifully that the second one story runs into the other, hilarity ensues. The cast is phenomenal and entirely committed to the style of the piece with Montgomery herself playing a role that is not too taxing on the vocal chords. The audience was laughing so hard through much of the show, some lines were even lost. Of course, a show like this really soars when it has excellent direction and the razor sharp timing and execution of each moment clearly shine through in this show thanks to [Paul Urcioli](#). Amongst many period comedies that need quite a bit of polish, this one shines as bright as a new piece of silver. To get tickets before they are no longer available, go [here](#).

Lastly, if one chooses to venture into the dark recesses of The Flea's underground theatre, they will find a very powerful work with some shocking moments of its own. [Follow Me Down](#) presented by [Aporia Theater](#), is a play that takes place entirely in a dorm at Oxford in 1925 and explores the fall of a young man named James, played brilliantly by Graham Halstead, who spends most of his time in the dorm taunting his fellow room mates with an ever present drink in his hand. Eventually James' drinking and taunting send him down a dark path, but in the process, many of the characters who the audience come to love throughout the show turn into much darker versions of themselves. No one more so than Thomas played by Thomas Anawalt, who undergoes such a startling transformation from the beginning of the play to the end that there were many gasps rippling through the audience when he finally makes some very dark decisions. What's great about the writing of the piece is that James is horrible to his room mates, but at the same time absolutely charming. He is perhaps the most dangerous of all bullies when he goes on the attack, because he is able to transform others through his statements. The play itself is an excellent psychological study that not only explores the young men, but a number of young women who they develop affection for. Sarah Elizabeth Wansley's direction is also to be commended specifically for getting such heart wrenching performances out of this stellar cast. Her staging is simple and elegant and really allows us to fall in love with the language of the play. This is a show that pulls no punches and in which there are no winners. It is an honest portrayal of insecurity couched in confidence and clever word play. And it is the type of piece that an audience is more than willing to follow down. Tickets can be found [here](#).

This weekend the Indie community is offering far more treats than tricks. All you have to do is go knock on the door.

Read more of Michael's insights at [www.oneproducerinthecity.typepad.com](http://www.oneproducerinthecity.typepad.com).

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