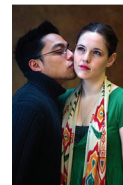


**Big Hunk o' Burnin' Love**  
 Pork Filled Players at  
 Northwest Actors Studio  
 Through March 24.

I can't imagine anyone hailing from a traditional background—Baptist, Jewish, Korean, whichever—and not liking this peppy play at least a little bit. Poking fun at Thai-American (or, really, any conservative) culture, *Big Hunk* takes the familiar theme of parents' hysteria over an unmarried child and gives it a metaphoric boost. Twenty-nine-year-old Winston (Jose Abaoag) wants to find the right girl, but Mom and Dad (Leilani Berinobis, Daniel Arreola) believe if he doesn't marry (preferably a Thai girl) before he is 30, he will spontaneously combust and die in an enormous shower of flames. The fictional family curse is a smart bit of invention from L.A.-based playwright Prince Gomolvilas; the breaking of family traditions feels like a violent, life-ending disaster to elders, and can incite anxiety and panic even in the younger generations.

The actors are stoked and loud. Arreola is sharp as Dad, his timing and gestures smooth and practiced. The comedy revolves around one-liners, sitcom style: "The truth will set you free—but first, it will piss you off," says Winston's friend Sylvia as he dives into a panicked countdown to his 30th birthday. In keeping with the Pork Filled Players' sketch-comedy background, *Big Hunk* consists of 18 short scenes punctuated by black-outs; the set is simply a puffy couch, dressed or undressed to suggest a living room or street corner with a pay phone. While Gomolvilas's script is hardly free from clichés (spare me the monologues about dreams and nightmares), *Big Hunk* is a fun, fast-paced look at intergenerational angst.  
 STACEY LEVINE



Pork Filled  
 PLAYERS  
 presents...

**BIG HUNK O' BURNIN' LOVE**

a thai american comedy...  
 about defying fate...  
 and finding love.



a play by

prince gomolvilas

march 2nd -24th, 2007



[www.ticketwindowonline.com](http://www.ticketwindowonline.com)

ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY YAMITRE COMBOYA THEATRE COMPANY IN MAY 2006, NYC.

# LIVING DEAD IN DENMARK

A PLAY BY QUI NGUYEN

ZOMBIES, SHAKESPEARE, MARTIAL ARTS.

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY DAN DENING

DIRECTED BY LISA ANNE GLOMB

MAY 1 - 24, 2008  
THUR, FRI, SAT @ 8PM  
THEATRE OFF JACKSON  
409 7TH AVENUE S, SEATTLE

www.porkfilled.com  
TICKET INFO: 206-448-8369

Pork Filled PLAYERS ASIAN AMERICAN COMEDY



## 'Living Dead in Denmark'

Just as things are getting a little ho-hum, along come the ninja zombies. These undead fighters really know how to make a scene come alive.

Before pulses can return to normal, there's a startling revelation. Not only does Fortinbras worship evil; he's also bionic – quite an asset if your aim is total domination of the planet.

If that name "Fortinbras" rings a bell, yes, you're right; he's the Norwegian prince who shows William Shakespeare's Hamlet how a real man handles power. In Qui Nguyen's "Living Dead in Denmark," an action-adventure farce that shamelessly shanghai's Shakespeare's characters, Fortinbras means to set magic creatures from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Tempest" and "Macbeth" against zombies. The living dead guerrilla fighters are refugees from "Macbeth," "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet." A few regular human beings – Hamlet's buddy Horatio, for one – must fend off both magics and zombies.

Is that clear? No? Well rest assured, clarity is not a "Living Dead" asset.

The show, a Pork Filled Players production at Theatre Off Jackson, does, however, boast some strong acting, a bit of interesting singing and loads and loads of martial arts, gymnastics and just plain meaningless violence – all of it pleasantly ludicrous.

In his shameless ransacking of "Hamlet," Nguyen even manages a bit of pathos. A puppet version of Laertes is compulsively searching for his dead sister Ophelia.

In "Hamlet," Ophelia is a forlorn wimp who commits suicide. In "Living Dead" she is a tough karate kid. She doesn't know who she is and what she is. But she's ready to take on, and thrash, anyone who looks at her funny.

As the formerly poetic, philosophical and brooding Hamlet, Bryan Bender is hilariously shallow as a zombie slacker dude in search of a way excellent adventure. Andrea Nelson is a torchy and fickle Titania, Queen of the Fairies. As Juliet, Miko Premo portrays a geek with a secret. Leave it to Lady Macbeth, a closey bulldyke zombie, to bring the truth to light.

"Living Dead" is a professional triumph for fight choreographer Lisa Marie Nakamura. She has the performers battling with daggers, swords, a garbage can lid, hands, feet and, best of all, lengthy sections of intestine. Those zombies! They stop at nothing.

Pork Filled Players director Lisa Anne Glomb keeps the action racing, sometimes with the help of heavy-metal underscoring. Her show may be nonsense, but it is clever and entertaining nonsense.

*"Living Dead in Denmark" runs through May 24 at The Theatre Off Jackson, 409 Seventh Ave. S. Tickets \$15, students \$10, discounts for groups; 206-850-7882 or oink@porkfilled.com.*

Reach P-I theater critic Joe Adcock at 206-448-8369 or joeadcock@seattlepi.com.

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER  
| THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2008

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Yellow Face a smart exploration of race



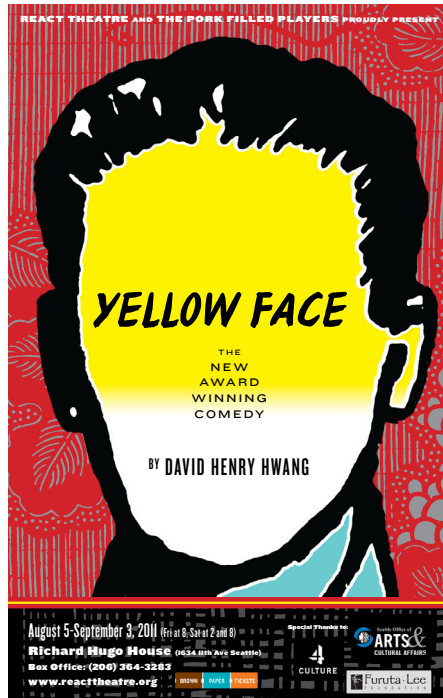
by Miryam Gordon  
SGN A&E Writer

**YELLOW FACE**  
REACT THEATRE  
THROUGH  
SEPTEMBER 3

A mix of truth and fiction is behind David Henry Hwang's mockumentary *Yellow Face*. That's certainly an excellent description of this layered, funny, wry, and

above all, deeply moving piece. *Yellow Face*, written in 2007 and produced by ReAct Theatre, is an up-to-date fictionalized biography of this award-winning playwright, whose best-known work is *M. Butterfly*. Hwang described it in a 2007 interview as "a play by an American play-

see **YELLOW FACE** page 31



### YELLOW FACE continued from the cover

wright of Chinese descent, which is about a French diplomat who falls in love with a Chinese spy, which is told in terms of an Italian opera about a Japanese woman who falls in love with an American soldier."

*Yellow Face* recaps that shortly after his success, *Miss Saigon* debuted in London with Jonathan Pryce, a white actor playing an Asian. Hwang and others protested Pryce's importation as the star to the Broadway production since they wanted to abolish the use of "yellow face" (an Asian version of blackface).

The "mock" part of the mockumentary begins as Hwang tries to cast his next (hopefully big and successful) play, *Face Value*, and ends up casting a white actor named Marcus as his main Asian character, justifying it by saying that mixed heritage Asians may not look very Asian anymore. We all know that this can be true and the play points to popular actors such as Keanu Reeves and others to make that point.

When Hwang wants to fire Marcus on the

basis that he's not really Asian at all, he's advised by the legal team that non-discrimination laws forbid it and he has to be careful. One of the funniest, truest lines in the play is when he asks, "People can be hired for their race, but not fired for it?" and the answer is, "People usually don't sue when they get hired."

So, Hwang publicly supports the mixed-race background of Marcus, calling him "Marcus Gee" and twisting his Russian Jewish background into "Siberian Asian Jewish." Marcus becomes so enamored of feeling a part of the Asian community that he becomes more "Asian" than Hwang, and Hwang is dogged by a character of his own making.

But the heart of the play is in Hwang's relationship with his father, an immigrant who came with nothing from China, and has become the chairman of a hugely successful American-Chinese bank. Henry Y. Hwang is portrayed as a bit naïve and does not realize just how dangerous life can become when the U.S. government decides that the bank may be a conduit for China's economic money-laundering.

Suddenly, the bank is being investigated, around the same time as noted scientist

Wen Ho Lee is being investigated for allegedly giving classified information to China. Both investigations collapse after evidence is shown to be based on biased and twisted interpretations, but the damage is, as usual, catastrophic for those involved. Hwang shows his father as losing his faith in his adopted country – a deeply emotional moment in the play.

The play calls for dozens of quick cuts from news headlines and quotes from famous people. Some are about Hwang, early on, and some later include a handful of Republican lawmakers, who demonize China in 2000, as they currently demonize Islam. Ominous for 2011 are comments by Republicans that, after Osama bin Laden is caught, the next "enemy" will be China.

Director David Hsieh keeps the energy up, though the quick cuts are a bit jarring and take time to get used to. Moses Yim plays "DHH" (David Henry Hwang) and generally does a good job, but his lack of acting experience means he has a way to go to overcome awkward delivery and self-awareness. However, scenes with the father and later in the play, as Yim gets comfortable, are much better.

Lee Osorio plays Marcus Gee and does

so with self-deprecating subtlety. You may find yourself almost vainly searching for his Asian background, just as the journalists and Asian students do in the play.

Henry Vu is David's dad along with other small roles and is a standout as the older, naïve immigrant who loves his country. Jeremy Behrens is another excellent ensemble player as he jumps from character to character, showing a surprising range. Stephanie Kim and Julia Beers also show great range in the variety of girlfriends and other roles they play, and Agastya Kohli acquits himself well as the narrator and in the ensemble.

Regardless of whether all the headlines and quotes are necessary, this is an extraordinarily accessible way to explore race and our personal identities. Hwang bravely makes fun of himself, but redeems himself in the end. The play hits Hwang and us in our political correctness and while it doesn't answer questions, it certainly stirs the pot. Make no mistake: this play is for everyone, not just Asian Americans. Go see it.

For more information, go to [www.reacttheatre.org](http://www.reacttheatre.org) or call 206-364-3283.

Discuss your opinions with [sgncritic@gmail.com](mailto:sgncritic@gmail.com).