

September 4, 2007

Dear John and the cast and crew of *Gatz*:

Words can barely convey how thrilled I was to see *Gatz*, more than two years after kicking myself for missing it at the Performing Garage. This is simply brilliantly crafted theater of the highest order. It's the most sophisticated literary adaptation for the stage that I have ever seen, one of the most living, complex stage organisms I've ever witnessed. I feel like I lived in that world for seven and half hours.

Gatz ranks up there with Wallace Shawn's *The Designated Mourner*, Ariane Mnouchkine's *Le Dernier Caravanserail*, The Wooster Group's *The Emperor Jones* and Complicite's *Mnemonic* as one of the most enriching theater experiences I've ever had. You leave the theater, and your relationship to objects, surface, light, is charged with the weird energy that you felt being exchanged between you in your seat and the actors onstage. You eat a cookie, turn a page in a magazine, hear other people's chatter and feel slightly abstracted from your body and reality because your mind was so consumed by the images and sounds. It's almost like you're a ghost after the show because your body is still in the audience.

I have to admit that I never read the novel in high school or after, but I don't care, since this way of absorbing the book was so rich and beautiful. I felt like you gave me the book in a way I could never have imagined.

Your orchestration of the design elements, the architecture of the piece, still causes my mind to reel. Themes of rootlessness, escapism in art and pleasure, social aspiration, living a lie, and so on, were beautifully expressed by that sad, rueful man in a crummy office reading the book. The office itself was both brutally real and wholly metaphorical. It was as if the office existed inside the fictional Gatsby's head, a tucked-away memory (premonition?) of banal beauty.

Scott just tore my heart out. Overall, you directed one of the best casts I've ever seen. Again, I want to congratulate you for crafting such a brilliant, haunting show.

Yours truly,

David Cote
Theater Editor
Time Out New York