

/gēk/

New England Theatre Geek

Needs More Lesbian Kissing or No Dick is a Picnic: “Cleanliness, Godliness, and Madness: A User’s Guide”

Posted on [September 29, 2016](#) by [Kitty Drexel](#)



Daniels and Wiseman getting sexy with their Republican selves; Photo credit: David Marshall.

Presented by [Sleeping Weazel](#)
Written by Charlotte Meehan
Directed by Robbie McCauley
Sept. 15-24, 2016
Boston Center for the Arts
[Plaza Black Box Theatre](#)
Boston, MA
[Sleeping Weazel on Facebook](#)
Review by Kitty Drexel

My sincerest apologies to the good folks involved with *Cleanliness, Godliness and Madness*. I’ve been quite ill with what I can only describe as the Devil’s lurgy. I shall endeavor to disallow my human frailty in the face of illness to force my hand (quite literally) in this way ever again.

(Boston, MA) To the lovers of button pushing, wildly liberal avant garde theatre, *Cleanliness, Godliness and Madness: A User’s Guide* (CGM) has closed. You missed a striking theatrical event. Attempts to remedy this miscalculation should be attempted.

The Trumpiest Trump supporters ever, Mary (Stephanie Burlington Daniels) and Grace (Veronica Anastasio Wiseman), are fighting the Lord's fight to return "decency" to their community. They undertake the serious business of papering their neighborhoods, meeting secretly – as their husbands (onscreen-only Steven Barkhimer and James Barton) don't agree with their pursuits – and engaging their peers to bring Patriarchal order via guns, heterosexual agenda-ed whiteness, and good 'ole conservative "Christian" values™.

[Daniels and Wiseman](#) give triumphant performances that stir the political bowels of what it means to be a decent human being. Meehan's writing is satirical to the point of offense; she is not kind to religious Right. Daniels and Wiseman take what is inferred by Meehan's writing and, while they don't create likable characters, they endow them with enough humanity to question Meehan's objectives. Mary is too innocent to be evil. Grace is too ignorant, too self-loathing to be hated on principle alone. And yet, for all their flaws, we cannot like them. As a MA, liberal-heavy audience, we aren't supposed to. This could well be the point. That we consider liking them at all is a testament to Daniels' and Wiseman's performances.

Robbie McCauley gets to play God. She makes a heavenly Savior, and gives sage advice. It would be easier to worship on any given day if The Powers That Be were all as forgiving and compassionate as McCauley's version. Meehan writes the Creator that way but it's McCauley that gives a kind face to Her.

Barkhimer and Barton were despicable. They only appear in Matthew Provost's Big Brother-esque videography but it's more than enough. Good job fellas; you were gross.

This show was so trigger happy that the triggers deserve their own paragraph. They include but are not limited to: general intolerance, gaslighting, domestic violence, [gun violence](#), racism, hypocritical homophobia, the 2016 Orlando club massacre, drug use, and oodles of sexism.

It would not be incorrect to label *CGM: AUG* as liberal propaganda. There's enough in Meehan's script to warn anyone away from political engagement of any kind. Dramaturg Kenneth Prestininizi must have had a field day. The question remains: can we still like ourselves for not having sympathy for those who don't think the way we do? The women who run this show and, by extension, their disgusting husbands are closed minded to things that are different from their perceived realities. Let it be a warning to us all that such tunnel vision, regardless of political affiliation, is desperately unhealthy.