



## Review of *The Madness of Small Worlds*

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The Sleeping Weazel Production Company is celebrating its second season in Boston, and is starting off with a bang by introducing us to the off-the-charts works of Elana Greenfield and Mac Wellman. How apropos for a production company whose slogan is “making different possible.” If anyone can make different possible, it’s Sleeping Weazel, and these two artists in a trilogy of the abstract put the Weazel to the test.

Mac Wellman is one of the most controversial authors of our time. When Artistic Director Charlotte Meehan, a student of Wellman, decided to bring *Madness* to stage, it was a move guaranteed to be wrought with controversy. Wellman has been called the “bad boy of theater.” He breaks all the rules: Plays without a main character, no plot, no confusion, and parallel dimensions.

Yes, I said it: Parallel dimensions.

This was a concept I embraced when I reviewed the play “Red,” the story of abstract expressionist artist Mark Rothko. I said:

“Mark Rothko (1903-1970) was an abstract expressionist who spent his life in his studio, with virtually no natural light or surroundings. We can call this ‘step one’ into the mind of the abstract expressionist. He gazes at his canvass and teaches us to question it: What we see, what we don’t see, and what the colors are. Is it red? What is red? This is where the analogy to Socrates comes in—question everything, trust no one, and always bend the truth because truth itself is a fiction.

“Remember, the world was once flat.

“As the lights go on and you come face to face with a red canvass and one Rothko studying it with all the intensity of a bug under a microscope, you know you’re going on a journey you’ve never been to before. You find yourself looking into the portal of a mind few people are comfortable in. This is the world of the abstract artist, and “Red” gives us a unique perspective into a brilliance we’ve never fully understood but one we always imagine existed, kind of like a fourth dimension.”

I am comparing *Madness* and Wellman and Greenfield to Rothko and *Red*, because I believe Greenfield and Wellman *do* play by the rules—just not in the spectrum we are used to. If Rothko stared at the blank sheet of paper and threw paint at it, he was simply sharing with us what he sees on the other side. Ditto Greenfield and Wellman: They are

throwing words at a blank piece of paper, not paint, to show us what's on the other side. The rules are different there, wherever "there" is, just like they'd be different in another dimension. What you are seeing here is the work of abstract expressionist playwrights, throwing words at paper, not paint.

Meehan does a wonderful job expressing a difficult task. The acting here was top notch: Kate Snodgrass, Katie Pearl, Erin Mallon and Timothy Siragusa. Special kudos to Ms. Mallon, who delivered an incredible monologue as the tall, thin girl...on the charcoal road.

Works that are abstract can be maddening and frustrating, yet welcomed and invigorating: Monologues, words strung together, complex words mixed with make believe words, some sprinkled with music. It is a mind-bending experience, so much so you may hear a snap.

This is surreal and bends the truth. It is almost fringe, but beyond fringe at the same time.

But remember, we love fringe.

Also remember, the world was once flat.