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**TM** Reviews May 7, 2007

New York

## *An Octopus Love Story*

Reviewed By: [Michael Portantiere](#)

One of the things that keeps theater so interesting is that you never know where you'll find great work. On a bad night, you can have a dispiriting experience on Broadway. Two days later, you can discover a gem of a play in a black-box space on the fourth floor of a nondescript office building on West 21st Street, which is where Delaney Britt Brewer's alternately hilarious and bittersweet comedy [An Octopus Love Story](#) may be found.

Presented by the unfortunately named Kids With Guns company, the play begins with an intriguing premise and runs with it: A gay man named Danny (Josh Tyson) weds a lesbian named Jane (Kelli Holsopple) as a protest against the ban on gay marriage. The intended point is that people of different genders are free to wed even if they're homosexual, they don't particularly like each other, and they have no plans to procreate, whereas legal marriage is forbidden to true lovers of the same sex, whether or not they want to raise a family.



Kelli Holsopple and Josh Tyson  
in *An Octopus Love Story*  
(© Mike Klar)

Brewer's credits to date are scant, but she has the stuff to become one of our finest playwrights if she's not snapped up to work in TV or film. *An Octopus Love Story* is notable for wonderfully well-rounded characters and uncommonly sharp, witty dialogue. (HE: Do you wanna stick around for dessert?" SHE: "It is getting late...I'm trying to be responsible." HE: For who, for what? It's a crepe. I'm not asking you to freebase off the kitchen stove.")

The author's extraordinary talent is evident throughout. For example, a scene in which newlyweds Jane and Danny are interviewed by an obnoxious reporter (played to the hilt by Andrew Dawson) threatens to veer into absurdity but is kept on track by the excellence of the writing and the acting. Similarly, the fact that the role of Kathy -- Jane's stepmom from Las Vegas -- transcends caricature is a great tribute to Brewer and to the lovely performance of Krista Sutton.

The balance of the cast is equally terrific. Tyson, who looks like a cross between Broadway's Matthew Morrison and Matthew Fox of *Lost* fame, is completely charming as Danny. Michael Cyril Creighton and Jenny Greer are spot-on as Danny's friend Alex and Jane's female lover, Tosh, the two rather abrasive characters who hatch the marriage plan. (Tosh is the kind of person who likes to boast that she graduated "magna cum laude" but is unable to pronounce that phrase properly.)



Then there's the gorgeous Holsopple, who by all rights will zoom to major stardom in no time at all. Her performance is so endearing that sympathetic sighs from the audience greeted several of her utterances during the performance under review. And when Holsopple's Jane performed a karaoke version of Elton John's "Someone Saved My Life Tonight," one could sense everybody in the theater developing a huge crush on her.

Though Mike Klar's direction of the actors is exemplary, he might have tended more carefully to other aspects of the show.

Nearly every scene ends with an awkward blackout, and the actors can be heard stumbling around in the dark as they enter or exit the stage between scenes. (Having recorded music cover the blackouts would do much to help the production's flow.)

John Wolf's lighting is probably as good as can be expected given the venue and the low-budget circumstances, but Brian Sidney Bembridge's scenic design is decidedly unattractive, with its hideous, blue-flowered couch, bright blue floor, streaked plexiglass windows, and an unnecessary clear plastic curtain that will make you think you've wandered into Bed, Bath, & Beyond.

Ultimately, such flaws scarcely matter. *An Octopus Love Story* is one of the best written and acted plays currently on the boards in this town, whether those boards be in the Times Square area or the Flatiron District.

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