

## Discovering Jonah

by Laura Palotie

The Disappearance of Jonah reviewed August 14, 2008

**Because of** the limitations of the Fringe Festival (a mere 30-minute window between shows and lack of storage space for sets), the most successful productions tend to be ones that thrive from a sense of minimalism. That the viewers of *The Disappearance of Jonah* may just forget about its limited production values is, in itself, an indication of the production's success. Blending driven young talent with Darragh Martin's lyrical script, the production is festival theater at its most enjoyable.



Asher Grodman  
Photo Credit: Dan Blank

The setting of *The Disappearance of Jonah* transforms from Jonah's family's kitchen to his fiancé Natalie's (Lydia Brunner) apartment and to a Lower Manhattan coffee shop, but each location change is accomplished by a simple shuffling of chairs and tables. Allowing the audience to imagine walls, doors and windows serves the play's intentions, as an invisible Jonah (Jeff Brown) often enters and exits scenes at his own pace, addressing other characters within his reality.

Jonah has already disappeared as the story begins, but the audience is introduced to him almost immediately. As Jonah discusses his choice of college with his mother in a flashback (he has chosen NYU in order to be with Natalie), his character becomes at once familiar and fascinating: a high school star adored by his family and teachers, his confidence is fragile in the face of an impending transition into adult life. Even though Jonah speaks like a writer--he suggests to Natalie that the two travel by hot air balloon and scuba dive in Central Park's lake--his mother (Lori Kee) is pushing him towards a doctor's career. His imaginative rambling reveals an intelligence nurtured by his surroundings, but also an uneasiness, a brewing rebellion against structured expectations. Jonah appears to be a boy whose thoughts keep him awake at night.

The story presents several intersecting narratives, the weightiest of which shows Jonah's brother Finn (Jake Green) searching for Jonah. Green has a tough role to carry, as he has to both establish a

### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JONAH

The New School for Drama Theater

**Category:** Drama  
**Written by:** Darragh Martin  
**Directed by:** Pitr Strait and Dan Blank  
**Produced by:** Aporia Repertory Company  
**Opened:** August 9, 2008  
**Closed:** August 22, 2008  
**Running Time:** 1h 15 min

**Theater:** The New School for Drama Theater  
**Address:** 151 Bank Street, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10014

### BOX OFFICE

**Tickets:** \$15.00  
TDF voucher accepted

### CREDITS

**Creative Team**  
**Written by:** Darragh Martin  
**Directed by:** Dan Blank and Pitr Strait  
**Produced by:** Liz Grefrath  
**Light Designer:** Pitr Strait  
**Sound Designer:** Pitr Strait  
**Props and Costumes:** Birdy Sahagian  
**Graphics:** Priyanka

self-conscious contrast to his charismatic brother and take charge of the forward motion of the narrative. He handles the challenge with grace, however, showing an honest vulnerability that ultimately helps him emerge as the stronger of the two brothers. Asher Grodman is also excellent as the distracted, ego-driven writer, whose storyline offers a genuinely fascinating turn to the story.

This Fringe entry is the brainchild of Aporia Repertory Company, a group consisting mostly of past and present Columbia University students. From the performances he has encouraged out of his actors, it's tough to believe that co-director Dan Blank is still collegiate--and majoring in political science.

*The Disappearance of Jonah is part of the 2008 New York International Fringe Festival.*

Choksi, Pitr Strait

#### **Cast**

Lori Kee as Ann  
Jake Green as Finn  
Jeff Brown as Jonah  
Asher Grodman as Ben  
Birdy Sahagian as Amy  
Paul Casali as Edward  
Lydia Brunner as Natalie

#### **Crew**

**Stage Manager:** Sam Reisman  
**Assistant Stage Manager:** Laura Cole  
**Publicist:** Priyanka Choksi  
**Managing Director:** Liz Grefrath  
**Artistic Director:** Sarah Wansley  
**Literary Manager:** Lydia Brunner