

7/20/2008

“How I Got Rich in a Year”

Yesterday, I went to see a movie and a play. The film was this summer’s mega blockbuster The “Dark Knight”, and the play, a one woman performance put on by my friend and writing collaborator, Laura Zam.

One had a budget of about 18 billion dollars, the other’s probably capped out at \$140 (that’s \$140, not \$140 million or billion). One could have been great but got mired down in its own contrivances and the other, sublime.

Laura Zam’s “HOW I GOT RICH IN A YEAR, USING THAT SECRET: A PLAY FOR BELIEVERS, SKEPTICS AND SLOBS” is an amazing, witty, sardonic, and uplifting deconstruction of modern life, new age enlightenment, self help manifestos, the scurrilous purveyors of both hope and despair amidst the inevitable outrageous slings and arrows of existence.

I’ve know Laura for many years, and she is co-writing a screenplay with me about New York City in the early 1980s. I was flattered when she boasted of our collaboration at an MPAA screening of my film, “The First Basket”. After seeing her solo tour-de-force, I was both giddy that I had chosen such a profound writer, and nervous that she will soon become too busy becoming a famous author to bother with the likes of my little NY story. Laura has just been signed by a top NY literary agency to write a book based on the play, and “HOW I GOT RICH..” is certainly the stuff of the great American post modern novel.

As we set out writing our little movie (tentatively titled A Million in Prizes), Laura made me read Robert McKee’s “Story”, on film narrative structure. I had sought Laura out exactly because I knew her to be dramaturge, and I wanted the screenplay to be structurally sound. McKee is the screen writing seminar guru in the film “Adaption” (hilariously portrayed by Brian Cox), and his book emphasizes very serious structural theoretics in order to express the great universal truths inherent in one’s story.

Well Laura has done McKee proud. “HOW I GOT RICH...” is overflowing with great universal truths about the human condition. It’s also captivating, entertaining, and Laura’s no holds barred personal revelations are variously incredibly moving and funnier than Gilda Radner on nitrous. In the show she labels herself a performance artist, which she later rejects in favor of “writer and performer”. She is also a superb comedic and dramatic actress, whose stage presence is only topped by her incredible writing. “HOW I GOT RICH...” is everything that theater (including performance art) should be and a much welcome alternative to even the best of this summer’s billion dollar blockbusters.

David V
5:25 pm