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## A *CurtainUp* DC Review **Stupid Frailty**

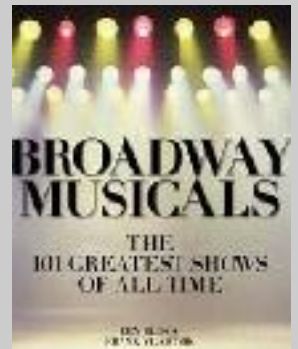
by [Rich See](#)

*The opposite of sad is...delicious.*  
---Maggie



Laura Zam

Newly formed MuseFire Productions brings to the stage a workshopped play from their 2004 "Summer Sizzle New Works Reading." The performance, *Stupid Frailty*, is an edgy ugly duckling fable with a happy ending. Playwright and performer Laura Zam pirouettes around the space, provides audience handouts and offers up a multimedia presentation to



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take us on her comedic journey of transformation through personal truth. What it becomes is a humorous and touching one-woman show that anyone -- gay or straight -- can identify with; especially if you've embraced dating services, Internet chats, self-help books, gyms or cosmetic surgery in the search for love and affection.

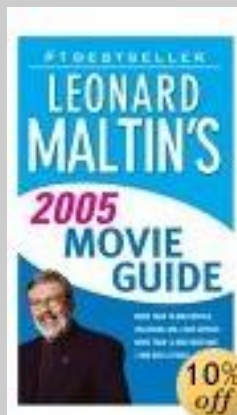
Director Michelle Hall has pushed Ms. Zam to include her audience in every aspect of the show, to utilize the entire space and to keep the tempo at a smooth pace. Thus *Stupid Frailty* takes on the sense of an intimate chat as Ms. Zam embraces her iMac, meets a fetishist Spanish aristocrat, or encourages her audience to express their inner feelings regarding hairy backs.

The basic staging for the show is very simple with a table and chair creating a café-like environment that also doubles for Maggie's -- Ms. Zam's character's -- home. Erik Trester's sound design and multimedia effects are fun. Throughout the dinner portion of the evening, the video shows us areas of Washington, DC, while the music is a melding of up tempo love songs. Once the show starts, each portion of the performance is accompanied by a visual presentation -- the perfect male back, Superman, Howard Dean, etc.

Included with the ticket price of the performance is a meal at the small theatre space. Sweet Mango Café advertises itself as "the best jerk chicken in Washington" and it also has a wonderful vegetarian option as well. However, this isn't dinner theatre, but (I imagine) part of the rental agreement with the restaurant. The cash bar closes once the performance begins and the dinner portion commences 60-minutes prior to curtain time. Like Logan Circle's 1409 Playbill Café these off-the-beaten-path theatrical venues have a wonderful way of bringing an entirely different ambiance to a show.



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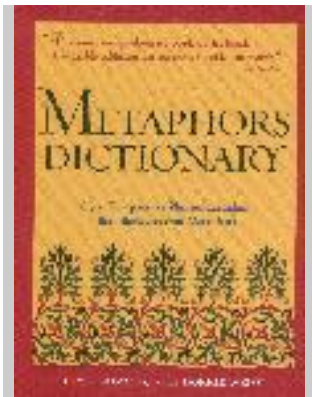
So I recommend taking some friends and experiencing the whole thing.

Starting off with "I'm not beautiful and I'm forty," Zam's character notes, "All my life I've only dated men in my league -- who I didn't find attractive." And now, just-recently-out-of-a-six-week-coma-and-partially-paralyzed-in-the-face Maggie is tired of her mousy approach to life and has set about to take control and be victorious as she hunts down a "delicious" man.

And what constitutes delicious? A *full* head of curly brown hair. An *extremely* muscular stomach. Straight *white* teeth. A *billowy* white shirt. And a *cute* little mole between the eyebrows. A passing knowledge of German literature, good personal hygiene, professional employment and a certain amount of charisma wouldn't hurt either.

And what kinds of men does Maggie find in her journey for love and acceptance in the nation's capital? A plethora of guys with online nicknames like Boner, Starman, and Just-Your-Average-Francophile. Fellows whose personal ads state "I like good music, fine wine, long walks on the beach at sunset and am able to jump from jeans to a tux at a moment's notice." To which Maggie has to wonder: Who are these men with lives that require them to own a tuxedo and wear it at a moment's notice?

As Maggie circumnavigates Jew Date, rawnerve.com, "It's Just Dinner" and surgical enhancement, she also fills us in on her childhood sexual abuse, the moment of clarity she experienced upon awaking from her coma, her lifelong sexual dysfunction and her abhorrence of excessive sweating. The laughs keep coming as she moves from one attempt to make herself a winner after another without ever doing what her self-help



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books ultimately recommend, which is to truly feel good about herself.

Ms. Zam moves through her various characters with great ease. Her saccharine dating service representative has just the right amount of phony sincerity and corporate marketing persona. Her wonderfully eccentric cosmetic surgeon Dr. Wang admonishes "I was a Caucasian man trapped in an Asian man's body. I was impaired. Now I not impaired. You don't have to be impaired." His solution to her partially paralyzed face? Botox the other side to even out the paralysis.

Ultimately, though, our heroine learns the important lesson that all that glitters is not gold. And at the point when she discovers "Anyone can tell you, if your life is uncluttered it is a better life." she also accepts what is truly important: that her value as a human being is not greater or lesser than anyone else's. And this simple truth opens up the door to potential love, or some semblance of it.

Ms. Zam could refine her line delivery as she often resorts to the same vocal intonation to give effect to her musings. However for the most part, *Stupid Frailty* is a fun show that provides a knowing look at dating in the "e-age."

#### Stupid Frailty

Written and performed by Laura Zam

Directed by Michelle T. Hall

Multimedia and Sound Design: Erik Trester

Running Time: 1 hour with no intermission

A production of MuseFire Productions

Sweet Mango Café, 3701 New Hampshire Avenue NW,  
Washington DC

Telephone: 1-800-494-TIXS, <http://www.musefire.org>

THU - SAT @8, SUN @2; \$16

Opening 07/07/05, closing 07/31/05

Reviewed by Rich See based on 07/22/05 performance

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