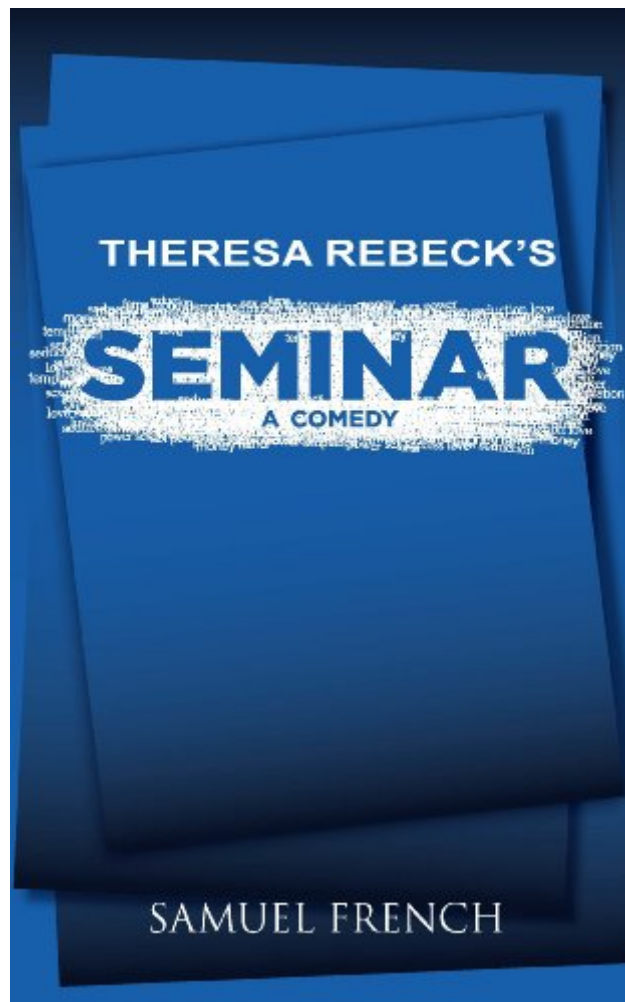


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Seminar



Synopsis

Nominee! 2012 Drama League Award for Distinguished Production of a Play. In Seminar, a provocative comedy from Pulitzer Prize nominee Theresa Rebeck, four aspiring young novelists sign up for private writing classes with Leonard (JEFF GOLDBLUM), an international literary figure. Under his recklessly brilliant and unorthodox instruction, some thrive and others flounder, alliances are made and broken, sex is used as a weapon and hearts are unmoored. The wordplay is not the only thing that turns vicious as innocence collides with experience in this biting Broadway comedy.

• FIVE STARS! Sexy, savvy and uproarious! • - David Cote, Time Out New York

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Customer Reviews

I saw this play on Broadway with the original cast, and I quite enjoyed it and made a mental note to read it, as I thought it seemed to have some rather nice moments. I thought it had depth. Having read it seven months after seeing it, I am not sure that it holds up so well. It is a fine piece, enjoyable and funny at times. But I did not find it all that profound or especially well written. It is a decent play, but not a great one, and there are many others you can read with much more to chew on. There are five characters in "Seminar", and only three that have much development. The

premise is that four writers pay a formerly successful writer to teach a private writing seminar. The main character, Leonard, is intriguing to the reader, and in performance is certainly dominant, but I feel that was due to the fact that Alan Rickman was playing Leonard when I saw it. I wonder if he would be as dominant, and important, a factor in the play with a weaker performer. Leonard does not leap off the page when you read "Seminar". Since he is the teacher who the other four characters revolve around that can present a problem. I don't mean to insinuate that I did not like reading "Seminar", I did. However, it is a good play; it is not a great one. I enjoyed watching it, enjoyed reading it. It is quick in performance, and on the page. However, don't read it thinking it is a brilliant piece of modern drama, or you will be disappointed. It has moments, for instance there is a great monologue that ends scene eight that leaps off the page, and is the finest writing in the play. There are enough moments like that to make it worth your time. A note about my edition, it was published by "Productions in Print" Press, and there are tons of typos and errors. Too many to be forgiven. Find a better edition, where the publishers were more careful with the editing.

This is a very well written dramatic comedy about writers. Not only is it interesting and highly entertaining--but the characters are complex and full of life. I've read a lot of plays with happy endings and likable characters--Rebeck creates complex and interesting characters that are very human and make you think. We have all had that professor that makes us think "Do you have to be so mean?" Leonard--The writing professor acts as a wonderful tragic hero and reminds us just how difficult it is to be an artist. Love, Love, Love it!

This is an enjoyable play about writing -- more specifically, the aspiration to be a writer. Rebeck's characters gather regularly to meet and discuss their developing works in a group led by a successful writer of dubious merit who is charging them a ridiculous amount to bask in his reflected glory. There are a few folks with real talent in the group, but "Seminar" is most interesting when Rebeck examines the desire to Be A Writer -- to be among the literati and have the admiration and respect of both one's peers and the masses. I stopped trying to force myself to write a novel when I realized my goal was not so much to tell a particular story as it was to force my way into that fraternity, not to write a novel but to have written a novel. I found a lot of truth about that sort of thinking here.

Rebeck creates complex and challenging characters whose desire to create is tested within a small circle of fellow writers. Whether you agree with their choices and how they live their lives is up to

you, but Rebeck gives her seminar participants both rough edges and vulnerability as they lay themselves before their compatriots in service of the written word. The pain that these artists endure and inflict on others is palpable, and yet with sympathy and humor, Rebeck reveals these literati wannabes against the back board of a bruised and battered misanthrope of an instructor who makes love AND war -- with them, and with his own journey as an artist.

This is a great contemporary play. It's loaded with an intellectual rigor that was pleasing to behold. I found the tension between the characters intriguing, albeit I found I was only really invested three of the five characters by the end of the piece. Overall a good play, and I look forward to auditioning for it.

After having recently watched the show, "Book group" I feel there's some crossover appeal here. Both are about the creative process inside and out to various degrees. In this we have four aspiring writer types: the pretentious bore who actually achieves some success, the starving artist who can judge others, but isn't that good himself, the talentless sexploitationist, and the overly sensitive author who sits on the same story too long. These types are put in a seminar with burnt out formerly successful author who is brilliant, but self serving in his assessments. This play isn't about character development, it's about this specific situation that a number of creative people find themselves in. They subject their work to a questionable mentor for the chance to get an honest appraisal and either improve, or get positive affirmation of their talent. What's interesting is how Rebeck is commenting on the creative process and where that meets commerce although not entirely concerning these characters, but the characters speak of it. The main thing is that each character subjects themselves to the vulnerable state of having their work scrutinized. Everyone has to do it at one point or another. I do question this process of seminar critiques as my experience is slightly under 50% that you'll get a worthwhile critique that'll change anything for the better. It perfectly captures that moment where you wonder if the entire thing was worth it and, in some cases how you feel betrayed by it.

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