

## Theater Review: Art's Healing Power from Brown Paper Box Company's 'Everybody'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 21, 2018 - 5:43pm

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CHICAGO – When is the last time a stage play, based in an intimate setting, made you think about your life, death, and the destiny inherent in both? “Everybody,” staged by Brown Paper Box Co. (BPBCo), is such a play, and the energetic aura and sense of surprise that the show contains is soul soothing wonder. The show has various evening/matinee performances at the Pride Arts Center in Chicago run through August 12, 2018. [Click here](#) [25] for more details, including ticket information.



Play Rating: **5.0/5.0**

This is a morality play (based loosely on a medieval play called “Everyman”), but really it’s a this-is-the-truth kind of coaster ride, because we’re all going to die. But reasonably, this is not the worst of obstacles, based on the symbolic elements – including “family,” “friends” and “stuff” – that the character of “Everybody” encounters. The magic of the play is that the core cast has learned all the roles, and their portrayal of a particular character is determined by a lottery at every performance. The content of the play is such that multiple viewings will expand the message (BPBCo will provide a punch card for 50% off the second viewing, free for the third. Artistic Director Kristi Szczepanek, has offered free drinks to anyone that sees the same cast twice).



Chelsea Dávid of 'Everybody'

*Photo credit: Brown Paper Box Co.*

To be brief about the “plot.” The concept of God (Chelsea Dávid) teams up with Death (Kenny the Bearded), and wants “somebody” to die. Death then goes out and randomly selects its victims. One of the victims (the Somebodies) become the singular Everybody (Hal Cosentino, Alys Dickerson, Alex Madda, Francesca Sobrer or Donovan Session, depending on the lottery) and the remaining cast act as Everybody's life concepts, because of the character's desire to take someone or something with them as they die.

The night I saw the play, Alys Dickerson was Everybody, and she was particularly effective, mostly because she seemed to go through the process towards a sense of redemption. My personal favorite concept she wanted to take with her was “Stuff” (represented by a medal wearing Alex Madda lording over her from above), and how having stuff does handcuff us, and the pursuit of it takes up so much time. Madda's expressiveness as that character reminded me of a young Carol Burnett, she represented that stuff as an ironic and ridiculous burden.

Kenny the Bearded as Death is most comically present. He has great chemistry with Chelsea Dávid's “God” – who later appears as “Understanding,” which tweaks the concept of the deity a bit – and the two initially appear to be co-conspirators, until the cast takes over. Death is present, but only becomes present in the way The Bearded One creates the role. We waited for him to come back after he went away, and he didn't disappoint when he reappeared. Which is opposite to what death is in reality, so kudos to The Bearded One.



Alex Madda, Donovan Session and Francesca Sobrer in 'Everybody'  
Photo credit: Brown Paper Box Co.

I suffered some personal loss because of death recently, and as I am left behind the inevitable questions came to mind about the departed. This play, written by Branden Jacob-Jenkins (the first time performed outside New York City), expertly expressed by the Brown Paper Box Co., has healing powers for that loss, and inspirational powers for the "life" that is left after such loss.

In 90 minutes, much of everything we have and know is rendered in "Everybody," and what is the key reminder? This life, it's just temporary. So the moral question of this morality play is... we all have priorities, what will be yours? One of them should be running out to see "Everybody," to bask in the glow of art that has the power of elevating your intuitive restoration.

*Brown Paper Box Co. presents "Everybody," in both matinees and evening performances on various days through August 12th, 2018, at the The Buena at Pride Arts Center, 4147 North Broadway Street, Chicago. Featuring Kenny the Bearded, Chelsea Dávid, Nora Fox, Hal Cosentino, Alys Dickerson, Alex Madda, Francesca Sobrer and Donovan Session. Written by Branden Jacob-Jenkins. Directed by Erin Shea Brady. For more information about the Brown Paper Bag Company, [click here](#). [26]*



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