

Bated Breath Integrates Audience into New Project

Meghan Maguire Dahn, Real Art Ways Staff

On Saturday, October 24, Bated Breath Theatre Company presented a preview of *The Parkville Project* (debuting Thursday, July 8, 2010). Helene Kvale, the Artistic Director of Bated Breath, worked with a team of actors and creative professionals to create this work – anthropological in scope – about Parkville, its history and communities. The company interviewed local residents, business owners and seniors. Combining original text, movement, puppetry, and projection, the production tells the story of an undocumented worker caught up in an Immigration Customs Enforcement raid in Hartford.

Bated Breath talks about the project as something that “weaves together” diverse sources and stories. This language is particularly apt: the play surrounds you – it wraps you up and implicates you in its action. Audience members were free to move through the space (the preview took place in the club room at Barça in Parkville) as they chose, and for me this meant that I felt more engaged in the process of the performance. I liked this embodiment of the way we create meaning communally.

Real Art Ways and Where We Live are asking us to consider where creativity is located in Hartford, and who makes up the creative class. To me, Bated Breath’s *The Parkville Project* is offering us a model of how an integrated creative class would look: they use oral histories and interviews as source materials, they utilize historical documents in the articulation of



the story, and they implicate audience members in the action of the play. This means that the creative act is a dialogic experience – it doesn't exist as a fixed document, but is cradled somewhere in the fibers that connect us to one another.

About Bated Breath Theatre Company

Bated Breath exists to breathe new life into the theater experience, creating dynamic and contemporary interpretations of classics and new plays. We invite our audience to engage with the work in non-traditional and traditional theatre spaces, encouraging an interaction that is both personal and communal. Bated Breath is committed to celebrating the diversity of its audiences through its groundbreaking work.

The Parkville Project

Produced by Bated Breath Theatre Company. Directed by Helene Kvale. Text by Michael Bradford. Movement by Greg Webster. Puppetry by Paul Spirito. Costumes by Laura Crow. Scenic/Lighting by Mike Billings. Projection/Sound by Chad Lefebvre. Music by Tim Maynard.

