

[title of show] is a real story. Or rather, it is a story written by real people, writing about the real events of writing this real story. It exists somewhere within the weird realm of verbatim and documentary theatre, plays that are culled word-for-word from pre-existing source texts. It's an historical fiction of the now, a metatheatrical extravaganza that will boggle the mind as profoundly as it tickles the funny bone.

This production of [title of show], however, is not real. Or is it? We are not the Real Hunter, Heidi, Jeff, or Susan; Torn Ticket II simply isn't written into the literal narrative of this musical. But Theatre of the Real isn't about facts and authenticity, it reveals no undeniable truths. Theatre of the Real is about confusion. The theatrical event lies in the muddying of fact and fiction, belief and disbelief, the dismantling of an audience's preconceptions in performance. We experience it when *SNL*'s Bill Hader breaks character as Stefon; when an actor is injured in *Spider-Man The Musical*; in Lindsey Lohan's drug-addled breakdown of a performance in *Liz and Dick* while she portrays another tormented starlet. It's that moment when the audience must ask, "Was that supposed to happen? Is this real?"

Where is the line between theatre and reality? Gender and race scholars posit that our identities are expressed through the performance of the quotidian, which then positions everyday life as a theatrical event. But the maxim "Everything real is theatre" does not also imply that "Everything theatre is real." How far can we deviate from the truth of this story, these real people and events, before it stops being a replication of reality?

Of course, I prefer to have a less authoritarian view of reality. Truth, replication, authenticity, history, these are all ideas that demand one superior, immutably perfect version of life. Unfortunately, nothing in life is perfect, and there is no such thing as a true reality. In fact, truth and reality are not solitary narratives at all, but lie along a diverse spectrum of perception. So the question then becomes: What can our nuanced take on the reality of this play show about the reality of our own lives?

[title of show] isn't set in the years between 2004 and 2008, when the original Hunter and Jeff wrote and staged the premiere productions, and it doesn't take place in New York City, their hometown. Rather, as Mr. Bell writes in his script, it is set in [time] and [place]. As you can see, this production of [title of show] is not trying to replicate that world and those people, but it blends realities to create a story that is as much about our lives and truths as the ones written into the show. And who knows, maybe it will say a little something about you, too.