

ARENA STAGE, Season Planning Literary and Artistic Team Reports

- A. YES, level up read **Title:** Endlings **Playwright:** Celine Song
Cast Info: 4W, plus 4 “white male stage managers” who do a fair amount of acting in the show. Especially one of them who plays “white male husband” - which may need to be cast with an actor or an SM with good acting chops.
Technical Requirements: This play requires a physically imaginative director’s vision. There is “diving” and an “ocean” on stage as well as many other fantastical visuals.
Should Arena produce this play? Why or why not?
Yes, this play is pretty great! It touches on a SPECIFIC experience in a way that helps us to look at things UNIVERSALLY. It’s one of the best of its kind in talking about “taking up space” as a non-white person in the world.

Overview:

We journey through a magical experience of 3 deep-sea-free-diving octogenarian Korean females living a life of desolate rigor but also of heroic feats on a tiny island. We follow the next generation’s journey through the eyes of the daughter, as she works to connect to her history. We are asked to question who gets the space, the privilege, & what stories get told.

Review

I found this play refreshing and real. The directness of the language created a rhythm for the fantastical journey, which I followed at each moment without ever losing connection to heart. There was a strong mother-daughter story underpinning the play that blossoms beautifully in the end. I love the physical storytelling possibilities. This is a play that does what theater is supposed to do - make us ask questions and require us to participate imaginatively. I also just want to know each of these 3 elderly women intimately. I love each of them. The themes of “taking up space” and who gets to do that and why - very resonant for an Arena audience. Also, just a fascinating slice of humanity that I’d never heard of before and now I want to know more. It instigated curiosity. The language is fresh, funny, direct, heartfelt, and true. There is also a strong female voice that is specific and makes us lean-in, learn, & imagine.

- B. NO, pass: **Title:** Honey **Playwright:** Tove Appelgren
Cast Info: Flexible cast from 2 (with doubling) to 9
Technical Requirements: Nothing extraordinary.
Should Arena produce this play? Why or why not?
No. It is not a topic with any universal connection or importance and does not touch on any fresh ideas. It’s a run-of-the-mill “here’s my personal life” story told from a privileged, white-woman’s perspective.
Overview:
A woman addresses her personal struggles in a therapy-style session and encounters characters from her life - lovers, friends, children, parents. She survives her life’s challenges with a positive outlook and healed relationships.
Review
The dialogue is written with great personality and snappy, fun drive - this is absolutely a strength of this play. I’d say the playwright is primarily addressing the question of how a woman meets the challenges of her life and relationships - especially surrounding love and motherhood. Thematically, the idea of what it means to be a female - mom, lover, daughter - is explored. This play would not be relevant to Arena’s audience - it does not address any societal issues or ask “big questions” with any rigor. I was put off by the inherent privilege in the writers perspective - essentially that she lives her life with “struggles” but never seems to have to solve them herself. It implies inherent wealth and white privilege. Even I, a white woman - mother, daughter, and lover - was put off by the bias of this script and it’s lack of ability to see beyond the author’s own personal experience. I would be interested to see if the author has written anything that was not based on such a personal story - since the dialogue and structure seem sound, maybe a different kind of story could hold promise?