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## Brian Copeland's 'The Waiting Period' review

Robert Hurwitt

Monday, February 27, 2012

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Patti Meyer

Brian Copeland tackles his battle with depression in his new solo show, "The Waiting Period," at the Marsh in San Francisco.

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### The Waiting

**Period:** Written and performed by Brian Copeland. Directed by David Ford. Through March 24. The Marsh, 1062 Valencia St., San Francisco. 70 minutes. \$15-\$50. (415) 282-3055. [www.themarsh.org](http://www.themarsh.org).

The subject is depression, but there's nothing depressing about Brian Copeland's "The Waiting Period," which opened Saturday at the Marsh. Quite the contrary.

Much of the material is intense, not to mention unsettling. Parts of Copeland's new solo show may move you to tears. But much of his dense 70-minute tale of his fierce wrestle with suicidal depression is as astonishingly funny as it is brutally honest - and all of it is admirably courageous, urgent and yet charmingly told.

Created by the popular radio and TV talk-show host with director David Ford - the solo-show maven with whom Copeland also developed his extra-long-running "Not a Genuine Black Man" in 2004 - "Waiting" generates considerable dramatic suspense as well. The story of how he coped with the mandatory 10-day waiting period, to get the gun he bought to kill himself with, has us counting down the days with him. And that's even after his sly imitation of a worried audience member asking her companion, "You don't suppose that he actually dies at the end?"

Clad in simple black shirt and pants and working on an almost bare stage - with unobtrusively effective lighting and sound effects by David Hines (also from "Genuine") - Copeland escorts us through the tale in a seamless blend of straight narrative, embodied scenes and quick character sketches.

The story runs from his first visit to a gun shop and the ominous purchase through the 10 days. Smartly planted details recap the dire trifecta that led to his deep funk: His wife left him (and their three kids), his beloved grandmother died, and he totaled his car in an accident that almost left him paralyzed and involved a very painful recovery.

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More attention is paid to the debilitating effects of depression. Copeland very capably laces his portrayal of the agony of the disease with comedy, from acerbic observations on his own behavior to crisp political quips. His caricatures of others are almost too broad but segue smartly from the ridiculous - a surfer-dude gun dealer, an obnoxious super-dad - through genuinely concerned friends to deeply affecting portraits of fellow sufferers and his attentive daughter.

He also slips in plenty of information about the disease, including a short list of famous depressives. "Waiting" is quite frankly a show with an agenda - to urge anyone suffering from depression, or who knows someone who is, to tell somebody before it's too late. Too often that kind of earnest motive can make for deadly entertainment. In this case, the result is positively inspirational.

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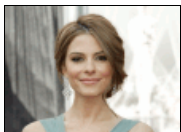
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