

New York Theatre Review

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Teddy Nicholas on Julia Jarcho's *Nomads* at the Incubator Arts Project

Nomads

Playwright Julia Jarcho

Director Alice Reagan

Producers Incubator Arts Project

Cast Kate Benson, Rebecca Lingafelter, Jenny Seastone Stern, Ben Williams

Set Carolyn Mraz

Lighting Jeanette Yew

Sound Erik Lawson

Music Chad Raines

Costume Ásta Bennie Hostetter

Incubator Arts Project

St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery

2nd Floor

131 East 10th Street

May 3 – June 15

incubatorarts.org

Tickets

\$18 /students \$14



Jenny Seastone Stern and Kate Benson
(photo: Yi Zhao)

Julia Jarcho's *Nomads* is a multilayered journey of human aching, the search for meaning and its unexpected consequences. In the 1930s, two women are about to embark on separate journeys. Joan (Kate Benson), a sly spinster with a collection of letters from friends who she can't remember, takes a fateful joyride with a seductively sinister cab driver (Ben Williams). Her friend Jean (Rebecca Lingafelter), a frustrated writer, travels to Central America in search of something *estupendo*. And though Joan and Jean share the same space, their journeys hurtle them towards unexpected places both physical and metaphysical. In one seemingly pivotal scene, Jean gazes out the window of her cabin and sees Joan staring back at her. Their seemingly psychic connection hints at the underlying mystery of *Nomads*.

Jean's search for marvels in the Central American jungle propels her into contact with a mysterious local magnate. What she finds is a sense of something familiar amid the unseen "Consolations" (like the fairies in *Midsummer*). Back in America, Joan's cabbie offers to drive her to an abandoned lot near tenements where occupants sit in the center of their rooms, never looking out at the world outside. When the suggestion of unsolved 'moodles' occurs (Jarcho occasionally lets loose a seemingly invented word that rings truer in the ear than any in Webster's), Joan shrugs it off with a confident sense of self-destructiveness. The cabbie brings Connie—strangely, coincidentally, introduced earlier as a roommate of Jean's—back to Joan's apartment, forming a strange triangle with an undercurrent of dread and death. When Connie emerges from the kitchen brandishing a large knife, the narrative shifts again, and fates are left uncertain.

Jarcho and director Alice Reagan allow the plot to snake along with a sense of sneaky simplicity. The set, by Carolyn Mraz, bisects the stage in orange and yellow, offering a quick visual nod to the double narrative. But Jarcho allows room for a sense of play: scenes end with awkwardly-composed sentences hanging like slabs of meat in a butcher's shop; characters, , almost schizophrenically, engage in long conversations with unseen auditors. There are even slapstick moments where characters find themselves mimicking their doubles like something out of a Marx Brothers film. But underneath the sense of playfulness lurks the creeping dread of something sinister, something broken—perhaps apocalyptic—never quite fully articulated.



Kate Benson and Rebecca Lingafelter
(photo: Yi Zhao)

Teddy Nicholas is a playwright and director from Queens, New York. He was a founding member of the New York based theater company Everywhere Theatre Group and a 2007-08 Dixon Place HOT! Festival Artist. His plays have been seen at HERE Arts Center, INTAR (American Nightcap), The Wild Project (Fresh Fruit Festival), Space on White (Snowballs Festival), Dixon Place, The New Ohio Theater (Ice Factory Festival), The Brick Theater, Ars Nova (ANT Festival), the Ontological-Hysteric Theater/Incubator Arts Project, 3-Legged Dog Technology and Art Center (Ohio Interrupted @ 3LD/Soho Think Tank) and Little Theatre. He is currently a Box Office Treasurer at The Broadhurst Theatre. His plays are published online at [Indie Theater Now](#).