

DEAR PATRONS,

Mariano Pensotti drew inspiration from the song “The Past is a Grotesque Animal” by the pop rock freaks Of Montreal when making his play with the same name.

Apparently, he listened to the song nonstop when writing the script.

At almost 11 minutes, the song has heft and scale. It’s epic. It speaks of a lifetime of longing, regret and rage that probably never materializes but is deeply felt. As Mariano told the *New York Times*, “The image of the past as some grotesque animal that changes shape every time you think about it is so close to what happens with the past and the lived experiences when you try to remember them or retell them in the present.

The past is always changing.”

It’s hard to explain what it is about the song that’s so addictive but after listening to it several times in a row, one may feel tempted to steal a car and drive to Juarez:

“I’m flunking out, I’m flunking out, I’m gone, I’m just gone/But at least I author my own disaster.” The lyrics and conceit of the song are simple but penetrating; the story and the sentiment resonate. Similarly, it’s hard to explain what it is about Mariano’s play that evokes the same thoughts and emotions. Somehow he manages to make an hour and forty five minutes feel like thirty minutes as he spans ten years in the lives of four characters. Maybe it’s his roots in film that allow him to take on such breadth of material with such ease. Maybe it’s cinematic language that allows us to be drawn in so effectively. Maybe it’s the rumination on fleeting youth and distant memories that hooks the viewer. Maybe it’s the revolving stage that not only keeps the action moving but reminds us that life never stops until it does. It’s difficult to say; it just works.

Mariano’s strokes are quietly bold. What’s new is his voice. His peculiar handling of material – text, staging, physicality and sound – constitute something unique.

Newness doesn’t matter here.

Congratulations to Mariano and his electric cast and skilled crew on the occasion of their first tour to the United States.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'Sarah Wilke' and the second signature on the right is 'Lane Czaplinski'.

Sarah Wilke and Lane Czaplinski