

massachusetts institute of technology

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guest authors/
ARTalk
a conversation about
the arts at mit

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THE FIVE MOST RECENT BLOG ENTRIES

"Truth Values" • [by Ken Haggerty '11] A fantastic one-woman show about life at MIT. (Now playing!) [posted by [ARTalk](#) on 09.22.09]

"Blog Entry: Recession Edition" • At MIT, your spoon is too big. [posted by [Yan Z. '12](#) on 09.21.09]

"Intense Procrastination" • There's a difference between procrastination and **INTENSE PROCRASTINATION!** [posted by [Snively '11](#) on 09.19.09]

"My Schedule!" • Listen to me blather on . . . [posted by [Snively '11](#) on 09.17.09]

"Week 1" • Autumn tastes like warm apple pie covered in bacon. [posted by [Yan Z. '12](#) on 09.13.09]

ADMISSIONS BULLETINS

On-Campus Information Sessions • We have updated our visit calendar for those of you planning to attend an on-campus information session and/or tour this fall, including Columbus Day and Veteran's Day. Please see the [calendar](#) for more details.

'08-'09 MyMIT Accounts To

ARTalk | September 22, 2009

"Truth Values"

[by Ken Haggerty '11]

As I walked into the main stage of the Central Square Theater, ticket in one hand and notebook in the other, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. The show, *Truth Values*, billed itself as "one girl's romp through MIT's male math maze," and as neither a girl nor a mathematician, I wasn't sure exactly how I would relate. I had seen the theater under construction my freshman year and noticed my sophomore year that construction was done, but it wasn't until last Sunday and the urging of friends in the arts faculty that I finally decided to check it out and squeeze a showtime into my schedule.



ABOVE: Central Square Theater's new venue. (Photo by CST)

The [Central Square Theater](#), home to two theater companies (*The Nora* and *Underground Railway Theater*), is located on Mass Ave just a short walk northwest from 77 Mass Ave (i.e. Lobby 7, the Great Crosswalk, and the Student Center). For those familiar with the area, it's right next to Economy Hardware and across the street from McDonald's ([MAP!](#)). In addition to staging

Be Removed • If you applied to MIT during the '08-'09 admissions cycle, your MyMIT account will be removed from our database in mid-September. If you plan to re-apply for freshman admission in the current '09-'10 cycle, you will need to register for a new MyMIT account at that time. We apologize for any inconvenience!

UPCOMING DEADLINES

Oct. 20, 2009 • Deadline to schedule your **interview** if you are applying **Early Action**.

Nov. 1, 2009 • Postmark and online submission deadline to **apply** Early Action.

Nov. 2009 • Last month for **Early Action** applicants to take **standardized tests**.

performances, Central Square Theater works closely with MIT via the Catalyst Collaborative ([CC@MIT](#)), which pairs artists and scientists from MIT and CST's Underground Railway Theater in the creation of plays about science in addition to discussing the cultural impact of such plays.

As I took my seat in the large **black box theater**, I read through the program about *Truth Values* and its lone actress, Gioia De Cari. Did I mention it was a one-woman show? And not only was Gioia (pronounced "JOY-A") the show's lone actress, but she was also its sole playwright. *Truth Values*, written by Gioia De Cari in 2008, is a **roman à clef** about her real-life experience as a graduate student in mathematics here at MIT. As is often the case with one-person shows, Ms. De Cari was required to play more than one role; in the case of *Truth Values*, Ms. De Cari played more than thirty roles. Yikes!

Finally, after a capella covers of "Gangster's Paradise," "Scientist," and what sounded like "Bad" by Michael Jackson finished playing in the background, the show began:



ABOVE: Gioia De Cari, an MIT alumna, in her many roles in *Truth Values*. (Photo by CST)

Now I won't tell you what happens, but needless to say, Ms. De Cari's energy, enthusiasm, and dedication poured out immediately and kept flowing for the entire performance. It was fantastic. It was very real, not simply because the story is indeed based on Ms. De Cari's own experience at MIT, but because of the way the story flowed from one scene to the next; the way she embodied each and every character fully, both physically and vocally; and the particular details of MIT life she decided to include. Everything was relatable. As a current MIT student, I realized through the show just how little MIT has changed, both with regard to its charming aspects and its more unpleasant side. This was no *Good Will Hunting* or *21*; everything that related to MIT was absolutely correct, and as an MIT student, I appreciate that. I found myself literally connecting events in my life to events portrayed in the play, and at the show's end, I felt that "connection," the "redeeming value," which you are supposed to feel after seeing a truly wonderful show.



ABOVE: Central Square Theater's concession stand has delicious cookies for only \$1 each :)

The show was followed by a brief intermission (during which I bought cookies) and a question-and-answer session with Ms. De Cari along with three panelists: Margaret Geller, a Harvard-Smithsonian astrophysicist among many other distinctions; Shoumita Dasgupta, Assistant Professor of genetics at Boston University; and Becky Kusko, an alumna of MIT's undergraduate program now studying at Boston University. The discussion was insightful, reflective, blunt, and optimistic, filled with anecdotes about the gender inequality which still remains in academia, particularly in higher-level jobs and in award programs such as the Nobel Prize (for which the last female recipient in a physical science was in 1964). Additionally, the panel discussed the increasing length of time and work required in order to receive a Ph.D. and its adverse effects: not only how it decimates women in academia, but how it negatively affects everyone else as well, including men. Finally, there was some discussion regarding the play itself and how it was made and how Ms. De Cari's education as a high-level mathematician affected her playwriting or acting, to which she responded that her facility with research means that she does incredible amounts of research for each character she embodies, even if that character only has one line. Then she puts this information into a spreadsheet.

It is of no surprise, then, that the play has not only received rave reviews from a whole variety of reviewers, including the *Boston Globe* and *TimeOut* New York, but also been extended for an additional full week! Meaning that this Thursday through Sunday (9/24 through 9/27) you'll be able to see *Truth Values* if you haven't yet already (and if you haven't I would definitely encourage you to go).

The author has filed this entry in the ["Music & The Arts"](#) section; check it out for further reading on this topic.

Responses To This Entry:

(Please note that comments are closed after 30 days to reduce spam.)

I'm seeing this in NY in October. Thanks for the review.

Posted by: [anon](#) on September 22, 2009 10:52 AM

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