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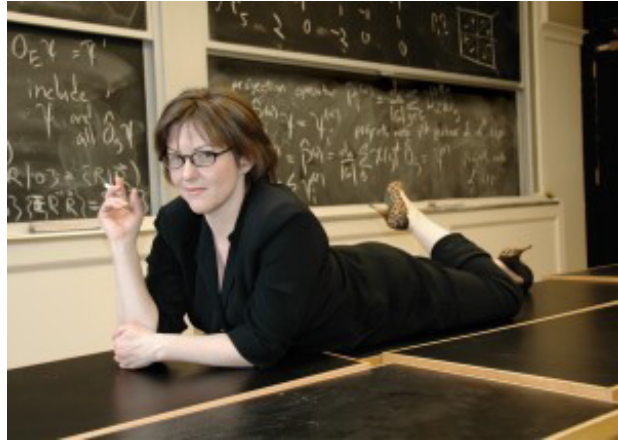


Truth Values: One Girl's Romp Through MIT's Male Math Maze

By [Rebecca Angel](#)

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Gioia De Cari wrote and is the one-woman force in this energetic, intimate, hilarious and angering play. *Truth Values* is about getting a degree in the sexist, male-dominated math department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Kathy Ceceri, fellow GeekMom and I, went to see this theater experience at SUNY Albany (with promotional tickets.)



Gioia DeCari in Truth Values, photo by John Olson

After the play, there was a panel discussion by women professionals in STEM fields and Women's Studies. They all had strong reactions to the performance. The entire evening was entertaining and enlightening.

Gioia was a graduate student of logic, specifically multiple truth values. Her experience at MIT swerved between examining the secrets of the universe and being told to “darn my socks” by the jerks she was forced to learn from and be around. Not all the men were horrid, but the atmosphere was toxic. Even the few women there did not reach out to each other.

The reason Gioia wrote the play was as a response to the president of Harvard University, Lawrence H. Summers' remark about how women might be lacking in the STEM fields because of innate differences, rather than discrimination. After watching this fine performance, I am amazed any women manage to make it in these fields considering the assholes they have to contend with while dealing with the usual pressures of school and life.

The stories Gioia tells are about the eccentric, lusting, patronizing mostly males on campus. She gives full-body impersonations of the nuclear explosive office mate, the chilly woman who eventually became a friend, the macho seminar professor, the grandfatherly advisor and more. The people and episodes made me and the audience laugh out loud, or groan in frustration.

While getting her degree at MIT, she moonlighted as an actress. She received her math degree, even reading us a portion of her thesis. Gioia describes her logic proof as, “a thought sculpture built from the poetry of pattern.” And yet, as much as she had a talent for math, the dramatic arts were always her passion. After graduation she turned to theater and never looked back.

Until that lame Harvard guy opened his mouth. Then Gioia remembered what she went through and decided to merge her experience with math, her proud feminism, and talent for theater into a fantastic play. I highly recommend seeing *Truth Values*. For upcoming performances, check out www.UnexpectedTheater.org.