

THEATER REVIEW

BY HEDY WEISS
Theater Critic

Though we are barely into the new year, there already is a champion standing tall (if battered, bloody and unmoored) in that big arena known as the Off-Loop Chicago theater scene.

Shattered Globe Theatre's gloriously authentic revival of "Requiem for a Heavyweight" is a genuine winner. And the production should banish any fear that Rod Serling's work -- originally a much-heralded 1957 teleplay, but rarely seen in its stage version -- is just an old-fashioned melodrama.

'REQUIEM FOR A HEAVYWEIGHT'

Highly Recommended

When: Through March 8

Where: Shattered Globe Theatre at Victory Gardens Greenhouse, 2257 N. Lincoln

Tickets: \$27-\$35

Phone: (773) 871-3000

Serling, the genius behind "The Twilight Zone," was a sterling writer who could pierce the heart and conscience without ever turning sappy. His "Requiem" -- part morality play, part surrogate father-and-son drama, part beauty-and-the-beast romance, part tale of innocence and experience -- still has powerful legs. Best of all, under Lou Contey's pitch-perfect direction, the actors, who seem lifted right out of the 1950s prizefighting subculture, possess an uncanny knack for casting a



Bill Bannon as Maish Resnick (from left), Sean Sullivan as Mountain McClintock and Brian McCartney as Army Hakes star in Shattered Globe's "Requiem For A Heavyweight". Photo by Janna Giacoppo

'Heavyweight' comes back as a true champ

Forget melodrama -- this is a romance, action, morality play

vintage spell while making every moment fresh and immediate.

Harlan "Mountain" McClintock (Sean Sullivan, profoundly moving as the strapping, sad-faced, gentle giant from Tennessee) is just 33. But after 14 years as a pro heavyweight (once ranked fifth in the world), he is halfway to the grave. After losing his latest fight (choreographed with hor-

rific ferocity by Nick Sandys, and enacted with Michael Falevits), he is forced to retire.

A pretty social worker, Grace (Paula Stevens, ladylike but never prim), fills him with possibly unrealistic hopes for a transformed life and work as a summer camp coach. But dirty reality looms larger as McClintock's longtime manager, Maish (Bill Bannon, an invaluable character actor), becomes indebted to the mob. His only way out is if McClintock agrees to humiliating work as a wrestler -- dressed in a clownish Davy Crockett costume for "fixed" bouts.

Supplying dynamite supporting performances

Shattered Globe Theatre's gloriously authentic revival of "Requiem for a Heavyweight" is a genuine winner.

here are Brian McCartney as Army Hakes, the trainer who admires McClintock and tries to shame Maish; Scott Aiello as a smarmy pimp of a promoter, and Jamie Vann, a hoot as Perelli, the cigar-chomping wrestling impresario. Cheers, too, for designers Kevin Hagan, Mike Durst, Cybele Moon and Mike Tutaj in this knockout of a show.

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