



## NEVER TELL

*Broken Watch Theatre Company at the Michael Weller Theatre*

*Never Tell* has a cast of characters that might feel at home in a comedy from Woody Allen's *Manhattan* period. But as playwright James Christy examines the interactions of five smart New Yorkers, he transports them to some dark terrain. In a series of monologues, they describe their initial sexual experiences, which range from amusing to harrowing. As betrayals and deceptions are revealed, the play ends grimly in metaphysical territory, underscoring what seems to be Christy's theme—that a sense of identity is a fragile thing that can be shaped and sometimes destroyed by friends and colleagues.

Manny, a low-key computer programmer on the verge of perfecting a breakthrough program that analyzes consumer behavior, is still suffering the heartache of a love affair ended eight years ago. Manny's best friend is Will, a fame-hungry gallery owner. Anne is Will's wife, whose family's money has funded Hal's gallery. Also on the scene is Liz, Manny's erstwhile girlfriend and Anne's best friend, who's back in New York after a long absence and recurring fits of amnesia. Finally, there's Hoover, Manny's quasi-hipster slacker co-worker, who becomes an interloper in this circle of friends.

Christy writes well-shaped scenes, but his script has some storytelling shortcomings. Some plot points are reiterated endlessly, while others are glossed over. The more dramatic turns of plot have a perfunctory feeling that Drew DeCorleto's expertly paced direction and the cast's polished performances can't quite disguise.

Jason Schuchman evokes empathy as the beleaguered Manny, whose identity is finally and totally negated. Matthew Wilkas alternates effectively between charm and smarm as Will. Mark Setlock takes on the difficult role of Hoover with aplomb, revealing multiple layers of personality behind a smart-aleck front. There are also solid contributions from Teresa L. Goding as Anne and Eva Kaminsky as Liz. The simple but attractive set by J. Wiese manages to easily suggest the play's varied locations, although the video images on one side of the stage are sometimes distracting.

*Presented by Broken Watch Theatre Company  
at the Michael Weller Theatre, 311 W. 43rd St., NYC.  
July 27–Aug. 13. Mon., Wed.–Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.  
(212) 352-3101 or [www.theatermania.com](http://www.theatermania.com).*

**Reviewed by Ron Cohen**

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