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## LOS ANGELES

### Thomas Hampton Reviews HOSPITAL • Wunderbaum & Los Angeles Poverty Department • RADAR L.A. 2013



Photo: Susan Campbell.

The pugilists are squared off in HOSPITAL. Wunderbaum and the Los Angeles Poverty Department combine efforts into a hysterically sloppy mixture of performance art and street theater pushing a bifurcated agenda of single payer health care and the moral and human imperative of a return to a true understanding and embracing of community.

HOSPITAL raises more questions than it answers. It posits medical professionals, politicians, patients, and pharmaceutical reps in a squared circle where the opponents are never clearly spelled out, no victors emerge, and the only losers seem to be our progeny, future global citizens.

HOSPITAL traces the American individualism inherent in our 'all for one' societal push and pull, as exemplified by our protagonist, John Malpede's real life journey of health care. We see each and every point where Malpede interacts with the system, beginning with his birth, and each successive entanglement with doctors, surgeons, and stacks and stacks of bills.

The show asks what is important to the future of a sympathetic humanity? A caring family and village that cares for the needs of the needy? YES. Emphatically. Wunderbaum and the Los Angeles Poverty Department make their stunning case by exposing how Jim Crow laws, corporate hand offs of inaccurate billing to collection agencies, and the avarice and greed of medical professionals trump the Hippocratic oath. This is real life. This is how the American medical/ health system profits and thrives.

Acceptance that health and health care is both a right and false promise rings true in a section of the play set in our present and near future. American Health Reform, 'Obamacare,' is over celebrated as the American coming of single payer- But wait, NO. That was struck down... Of limits on health care expenditures- NO. That was axed from the legislation as well. Contrasted with the ability of a veteran to get Veterans Administration health care free of

charge, with no co-pay and no deductible, even not for profit managed care exposes itself as a very ornate, beautiful, hand woven basket of snakes.

HOSPITAL derides the Reagan policies of de-funding California's hospitals that cared for the mentally ill, that closed down the institutions offering care to a marginalized, forgotten, invisible population, instead of confronting a wealthy tier of corporate and individual taxpayers to pony up and fund the care for those in need. In Reagan's hands, trickle down economics becomes a purposeful experiment in funneling unfortunates into a devoid, empty, economically devastated area, only to be displaced by police actions in preparation for the 1984 Summer Olympics.

What price do we pay for pushing out the mentally ill that have been forcefully evicted from institutions into the largest, cheapest Asylum in America; Los Angeles' Skid Row?

In sharpest focus, the Netherlands' Wunderbaum and Los Angeles Poverty Department isolate a loneliness inherent in Western Culture's focus on individualism, self reliance, and self importance.

By forgoing the importance of the support of a village, community, and family necessary to complete an individual's life, the Western elderly need a coterie of assistants providing care that village and community conscious peoples take for granted, or are graced with through familial and tribal ties.

The most deadening facts that face the audience of HOSPITAL are that 'medical care reform' or OBAMACARE as branded by both it's enemies and allies barely addresses the true needs of a person.

Health care, healthy LIFE, is a right, not a privilege.

To see the pugilists on stage at Eighth and Broadway in a gorgeous, dilapidated vaudevillian theater makes one wonder whom are the pugilists?

Doctor v. Insurer?

Insurer v. Client/ Patient?

Pharmaceutical Company v. Doctor?

Client v. Insurer?

Who knows.

The squared circle is lit and set, and you can draw your own conclusion from the Fourth Wall avoiding presentation that is Hospital.

And don't forget to check in to your options come October... Heath reform is (supposedly) upon us.

<http://www.thomashamptonreviews.com/2013/09/25/thomas-hampton-reviews-hospital-%E2%80%A2-wunderbaum-los-angeles-poverty-department-%E2%80%A2-radar-l-a-2013/>