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Review: Discarded Landscape/PAC/Edge Festival

MARCH 17, 2005 AT 12:36 PM BY [ILANAKOWARSKI](#)

RECOMMENDED

Last year's PAC/Edge

Festival featured as its commission winner "Air Tact Light" by Brian Torrey Scott, a play that to my mind smothered its genuine insights in pretentious abstraction. "Discarded Landscape" reunites director Scott with the cast of "Air Tact Light" (Donoval Sherman, Tiffany Liveris, and Jeff Harms) presenting a performance developed collaboratively as the collective Weather Talking. "Discarded Landscape" displays both the strengths and the pitfalls of its collaborative development. The piece is bursting with inventive visual, kinesthetic and narrative ideas: A father and son talk while running side by side in slow motion; characters crumple and fall to the floor without warning; handheld lights harshly illuminate half the blackbox stage, leaving the speaking characters in shadow; suddenly, we are in the midst of a Chekhov parody, "The Japanese Fig." From moment to moment, "Discarded Landscape" is captivating. At the same time, it's less clear that these brilliant moments fit together to form a coherent whole. The family drama that nominally organizes the piece remains both vague and fanciful throughout. If Weather Talking can match the specificity of its physical and theatrical moves with tighter, more concrete language, their contribution to performance in and beyond Chicago, on the evidence of "Discarded Landscape," is potentially immense. (John Beer)

This production is now closed.

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