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# 'I was Hamlet' poetry dance and politics at the Hollywood Fringe

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Images from the "I was Hamlet" performance at the Hollywood Fringe 2016

*Jaclyn Chesson*

"I was Hamlet" is an interactive [performance art](#) piece put on by the "Post Mortem Movement Theater" and directed by Angela Lopez at the Hollywood Fringe 2016. As it's inspiration it takes the basic characters of [Shakespeare's](#) Hamlet and reduces them to steam punk meets burlesque characters that move and wax poetical to the themes of revenge, love, hate, obsession, gender identity, and death.

Each night is tailored to the whims and improvisation of the cast, especially the words and actions of Angel Correa who plays Hamlet but punctuated by beautiful strange and burlesque dancing and also haunting songs by the other characters in the piece. The night of June 17th for example, was a dedication to the 50 who died in a gay bar in Orlando when a gun man opened fire. They sang a song to the victims and projected their images on the ceiling.

Unlike in Shakespeare's play, Ophelia's death is portrayed violently in the center of the room and yet it seems more of a murder than a suicide. Yet Ophelia does not stay dead and informed the audience she died in song and movement. Hamlet's death is portrayed as heroic and his actions are questioned as both insanity and acts of rebellion and change, and a reaction to the atrocity and betrayal of Hamlet's mother to his father.

This piece emphasizes that it is about the gay community and their standards, yet to that community family acceptance and love matter just as much as it does to the heterosexual community. To be denied safety, love and security is as violent to what is right as Hamlet finding his mother in bed with his Father's brother.

This piece reflects the politics of today. Angel Correa broke character and had the audience gather around him while he read a poem called "All the Dead Boys Look Like me." He told the audience his name, about his life, and how much he detests Donald Trump. This piece is one for those on the edges of culture but firmly rooted in the culture of the gay community. It is violent at times and strange to those not in that community. It is sexually explicit. Yet the overall message is that humanity needs to become better.

Other players in this production include, Emily Josephine playing Ophelia and Elektra, Lauren Henning as "the Drowned Ophelia," Erin Gophie-Lawson as a statuesque Gertrude, Maestrobator as Claudius, Stephen Beitler as a dancing acrobatic Horatio, Katie Powers-Faulk as Yorick, Jeffrey Kieviet as Death, Kyle Johnston as the "Ghost of Hamlet's father," and Sayaka Miyatani and Maral Milani as "Women of the Gallows."

For more information about the production please see the [Hollywood Fringe website](#), or visit the site of the [Post Mortem Movement Theater](#).

(Please note the author of this article is straight and wishes not to offend the gay community.)

## **SUGGESTED LINKS**

- **All female 'Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged) at the Hollywood Fringe**
- **Shakespeare four hundred plays at the Hollywood Fringe**
- **"Shakespeare's Last Night" the bard's last hurrah at Hollywood Fringe**
- **Romeo and Juliet: An ASL Love Story expressive physical emotion at the Fringe**

**Laura Tull**

LA Performing Arts Examiner



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