



TWO DOORS THEATRE

FLAGGING THEATRE FROM COAST TO COAST

THE COMMON AIR" REACHES FOR THE SKIES AND SOARS

By Jesse Schmitt

Every sentence creates its own alternate reality. Every uttered word amounting to an individual interpretation can come up against someone else's words, interpretation, and reality. This is our actual world as each sound heard has its own unique effect on an individual person; and so it is for the six characters in "The Common Air."

"The Common Air" is a new show written and performed by Alex Lyras and written and directed by Robert McCaskill, which features the thoughts, feelings, and intentions; deliberate or haphazard of six strangers told through the vehicle of one man. There should be no surprise when it's revealed that every one of the characters, like each one of us, have their own reason, their own logic, their own spin, their own justification for doing the things that they do regarding their ever lingering, ever intensifying airport delay of which they're a part.

This is the reality of which we have all gotten uncomfortably used to, where an airport delay can mean an impending weather crisis in a distant hub city, just as much as it could mean collision of taxiing plane on the runway, just as much as it could mean a thwarted terrorist plot. These reasoning's would often come smack up against one another and the invocations from their sources were astute, ridiculous, prescient, understated, and understood in the hyper real world of modern fear that we all live.

Some of the spooky, rambling, point blank statements which some of the characters are credited draws them into immediate suspicion. The self involved, all too

prepared, "hipster DJ" seems a little bit too attuned to what it is that is going on; so much so that he is able to rap about it; there is a professor who is battling his near ex-wife over custody issues on his cell phone which he seems a little bit too impassioned about for good taste in public. There is the perspective of an Iraqi-American who has just returned from Baghdad and of course the old man Iraqi cab driver and his prattling which all seem, upon first glance, a little too suspicious for comfort.

The one strain connecting all these varied characters is that they all share one body as one single actor plays them all. This is the truly impressive statement about "The Common Air:" All these wildly divergent characters (as well as a gay gallery owner and a corporate attorney) are all played by one man in one show at one time.

From my description, it may appear that a show like "The Common Air" would be too cumbersome, too full of noise, too rife with self-satisfaction and plainly just too much a problem. This couldn't be further from the truth as Alex Lyras plays all the characters with a measured intensity and a brave cunning, which is truly hilarious, moving, stunning.

It shouldn't surprise anyone that Mr. Lyras and Mr. McCaskill have a long history in crafting these stories so effortlessly; as well it shouldn't surprise anyone that this show is now headed for an even further reaching audience. Mr. Lyras is a versatile and uber-talented solo performer who aims to bring the art of story back into storytelling and is trying to reach this ground from the platform of our shared Common Air.