

## 'round midnight // i got it bad (and that ain't good)

*runner*

Ashley Cook

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August 11 marked the world premiere of *'round midnight // i got it bad (and that ain't good)* by Detroit-based playwright and poet will street. The production is a semi-autobiographical semi-love-story told eagerly by the main character and narrator whose name is Elijah Eddleman. street's experience working at the Detroit Repertory Theater as an Administrative Assistant, Box Office Manager and Actor has supported his drive to build a career in the world of theater thus far, which has most certainly had an impact on the writing for this most recent work. His creative curiosity combined with behind the scenes exposure to stage production and set design allowed for an innovative approach to the script as well as the visual and auditory experience of the audience.

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The story commences with a heartbroken 22 year old who had just gone through what we learn later to be one of many break-ups. street as Eddleman sits in a melancholic position, head down, slouched in a red velvet chair reserved for the hero. Pipe in hand, he addresses the audience first in search of a lighter before setting the stage for the tale he is about to tell. And the way in which this story is told could perhaps remind us of the particularly youthful perspective of its writer. Obviously influenced by the most contemporary story-telling techniques in the current of our media stream, street does not shy away from exploring the effects of pacing, lighting, line breaks and scene changes. Under the direction of Darren Shelton, what can be observed in real time as an audience member within the Black Box Theater at Planet Ant is a sudden throwing of energy from one part of the room to the other and an abrupt alteration of attention from one moment to the next. An inventive visual layering superimposes light and projected image over furniture and human form with ease. It almost feels like a toned-down post-internet approach to live theater.



An explicit narration takes our hand to guide us through the fog of abstraction generated by this experimentation in case we get lost along the way. But what could be a better approach to talking about love and loss besides a fog of abstraction...The main character, Elijah, is transparent about his relationships and how they made him feel. He recounts the various lovers that occupy his romantic history, all of which are performed by supporting actor Logan Monson. Together, Monson and street illustrate quite a tragic comedy through dialogue, monologue, metaphor, analogy and even sometimes a brief and desperate moment of song. From lover to lover to lover, the complexities of homosexuality only further complicate the coming-of-age process for Eddleman. The already confusing waters of love that we are all left to navigate with very little direction, even as youth, are further muddied by clandestine affairs that can occur when closeted or dating others who are closeted. The narrative also touches on the challenges of polyamory, the fear of vulnerability and, of course, the delights of emotional and physical intimacy.



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'round midnight is a two part performance with a brief wall projection to distinguish our entrance into the second half of the show. The swift delivery of lines, the playful application of visual elements and the sounds that fill the room like audible onomatopoeias are now occasionally joined by sudden throwbacks to scenes from Part One. They are almost perfectly replicated and then extended to elaborate on the initial scene where it was previously cut off, as if an attempt to portray the relationship between real-life experience and a daydream of a memory. While Part One starts in current time, it quickly becomes convoluted by recollections of the love life of Elijah, with Part Two providing a little additional context, like the story of his parent's approach to his earliest sexual behaviors. What stands out as a dominant element is the philosophical outlook on it all. The narrator Elijah Eddleman weaves regular reflections throughout his reminiscences of lust, love and loss. Hellos and goodbyes are followed by poetic contemplations over and over again, closing in a grand finale of realization about the essential role that self-love has in navigating a world where all is fair in love and war.



'round midnight // i got it bad (and that ain't good) was written by will street and directed by Darren Shelton and stage managed by Danielle Rosni. It is the first play in the Black Box of Planet Ant since the onset of the pandemic and runs through Saturday, August 26th, 2023. To get tickets for Thursday, Friday or Saturday or to learn more about Planet Ant, visit <https://www.planetant.com/>

Photos by Ashley Cook

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