

## Brave New World Rep offers searing update of August Strindberg's 'Miss Julie'

By Lore Croghan  
*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*  
Photos by Doug Barron

Scandal on the trading floor!

And you can see it unfold, up close and personal.

Julie Harper, director of equity sales at HadleyMoore Investment Bank, has sex with a janitor and lives to regret it.

She's the title character in a searing adaptation by Leegrid Stevens of "Miss Julie," August Strindberg's 1880s play.

This new version of the Swedish playwright's "naturalistic tragedy," as Strindberg called it, is a brutal meditation on race and class divisions in contemporary America. It is called "Ms. Julie, Asian Equities."

It's really something. Put it on your calendar pronto.

It opened Thursday night, and there are just nine more performances scheduled. The production's run will end on June 3.

This is the world premiere of Stevens' adaptation. It is being staged as a site-specific production on Brooklyn's only trading floor, which is at the Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance in Bedford-Stuyvesant. It is directed by Rebecca Martinez.

"Ms. Julie, Asian Equities" is being presented by Brooklyn-based Brave New World Rep, a theater company co-founded by actress, director and writer Claire Beckman.

The group is an endlessly inventive stager of immersive theater productions. It became well-known in 2005 by presenting "To Kill a Mockingbird" on the front porches of Victorian houses in Ditmas Park. More than 2,000 people attended the performances.



Juan (played by Michael Castillejos) shares a moment with Christina (played by Jacqueline Guillén).



Trouble on the trading floor: Erin Treadway as Julie

### Sex in a supply closet

In "Ms. Julie, Asian Equities," Brooklyn playwright Stevens, who has a master of fine arts in playwriting degree from Columbia, turns the man Julie casts her eye upon into an undocumented immigrant from Mexico.

Juan makes a living by scrubbing floors and cleaning toilets, but has big ambitions.

He and Julie have sex in a supply closet on the night of a holiday party for the building-services workers at HadleyMoore. Another janitor, watching on security cameras, sees them duck into the closet.

It's the middle of the Great Recession. How will Julie find another Wall Street job if she gets fired?

The three-person cast does a superb job with this scathing work. Erin Treadway plays Julie. Michael Castillejos plays Juan. Jacqueline Guillén plays Juan's fiancée, a hard-working food-services employee named Christina.

Treadway carries us compellingly through Julie's rapid mood swings from self-loathing to scorn for Juan, from forced merriment to desperation.

Julie and Juan start off by quoting Shakespeare to each other. But soon enough, the poet who comes to mind is Dante and his "Inferno," as Julie relentlessly, hellishly torments Juan and herself.

The two characters say a boatload of shocking and hurtful things — which is exactly what Strindberg had in mind.

Stevens' adaptation hews faithfully to Strindberg's original play about the great divide between aristocrats and servants. Both are full of disturbing moments and harsh observations about human nature.

The adaptation is very timely at this American moment, when immigration, deportation and a proposed Mexican-border wall are hot topics.