

# MUD – Teatro Círculo, New York

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**Writer: Maria Irene Fornés**

**Director: Elena Araoz**

**Reviewer: Robert Price**

Mae is doing her best to learn to read at school but she has trouble retaining. At home she irons the pristine clothes of other people while she cooks for Floyd. Floyd can't read at all but he's proud of his accomplishments. He postures and brags like a seven-year-old about having raped one of the pigs, even trying to make Mae jealous, but Floyd is swept to the side as Mae becomes interested in their neighbor Henry. Henry is an older man who can read more advanced words, even if he doesn't quite grasp their meanings.

As Mae tries to balance what both men demand of her, their power struggle manifests in visceral actions on stage. It's a dance of oppressive affection that endears the observer to the competitors. Fans of Fornés will recognize how the sparse language serves an immersive spatial experiment, part Theatre of the Absurd and part Allegorical Realism.

Nicole Villamil as Mae takes on hope against a suffocating despair, blessing these creatures with touches of humanity. Julian Elijah Martinez has impressive stamina for the athletics Floyd demands, and a charisma that buoys a dirge with energetic humor. Nelson Avidon's Henry is an insidious force upon the text, with a disarming drawl. Lighting transitions from María-Cristina Fusté seem jarring at first in their Brechtian tableaux, but become the necessary breath in a tense progression, cooperating with hypnotic sound design by Nathan Leigh.

Elena Araoz has put together a fully realized production that makes every moment a story told in gesture. It is at times horrifying, but honest in its brutality and severe in its simplicity.

**Runs until 29 October 2017 | Image: Al Foote III**