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StageGrade: A Middling Week in Midtown

NEW YORK, September 4, 2010 -- Four Off-Broadway shows opened in the past week in midtown New York and got tepid to bad reviews, with the jukebox tuner **Power Balladz** and the baseball drama **All-American Girls** each garnering a C+. The others fared worse: a new drama about Edwin and John Wilkes Booth, **An Error of the Moon**, languishes with a D+, while the would-be Hollywood satire **It Must Be Him** is confined to the corner with an D-.

The Broadway season is still weeks away from kicking off--and yet we've already graded some of it. On Sept. 10, an innovative take on the Noel Coward romance **Brief Encounter** returns to New York; it got high marks when it ran at BAM in December '09.

Other Broadway offerings this fall that are transfers, and have thus have previously been StageGraded, include Kander and Ebb's **The Scottsboro Boys**, which divided critics and stood with a B- (opening Oct. 31); and Shakespeare in the Park's **The Merchant of Venice**, marked as an A- (opening Nov. 7). Technically, Donald Margulies' drama **Time Stands Still** is not a transfer; it's reopening on Broadway Oct. 7 after playing on Broadway last spring, when it got a B+.

On the other hand, we just learned that the musical **Yank!**, originally planned to open on the Main Stem this season, will not be reporting for duty just yet; its Off-Broadway run ended up with an encouraging B+.

StageGrade was established in response to the common lament that a show's success or failure seems inordinately tied to what just a few (or even just one) critic wrote about it. StageGrade effectively democratizes the critical response, ensuring that every reviewer with something worthwhile to say -- from *The New York Times* to OffOffOnline -- is considered equally, thus providing readers with a uniquely trustworthy sense of the critical consensus on every show.

This simple but potent idea has already garnered key endorsements: A front-page story in *The New York Times* cited StageGrade as an authoritative source for how critics respond to Broadway shows. Meanwhile, StageGrade was selected for a 2010 Yale Entrepreneurial Institute Summer Fellowship, and was named a 2010 Company To Watch by the Connecticut Technology Council.

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