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## Theater: "You Will Experience Silence" Rejuvenates Queer Performance Art

By Jonathan Warman



Max Steele, Dan Fishback and Joseph Keckler in "You Will Experience Silence." (Photo: Eric Lippe)

Performance artist Dan Fishback's latest, "You Will Experience Silence," is frisky, funny, freaky and fierce. Seeing this very downtown work in the midst of Broadway's pre-Tony crush was like a splash of cold water in the face. "Silence" is so much smarter, wittier and sexier than, say, "God of Carnage."

In ancient Israel, dorky queer teenager Judah Maccabee (Fishback) and his best friend Ezra (Max Steele) go to the hot new "gymnasium" in Jerusalem to watch the sexy naked guys

wrestle. When they encounter hunky Greek soldier Demetrius (Joseph Keckler), they come face to face with their responsibilities—to their people, to their libidos and to each other.

Their story is interspersed with contemporary monologues from Ian Fleishman (also Fishback), a neurotic activist who spends his mornings in bed, calling the White House to complain about the state of the world, the war and his love life. This part feels more like what we expect from queer performance art: politically engaged, highly personal and the teensiest bit pretentious around the fringes. But Fishback's razor-sharp sense of humor cuts away the form's worst excesses; these monologues alone would make first-rate, very 21st century performance art.

By adding the playfully irreverent scenes with Steele and Keckler (and one with Cole Escola), however, Fishback takes the whole enterprise up a notch. He writes with great economy, and can go from goofy riffs to flashes of deep feeling and intellectual insight with startling speed and skill. Director Stephen Brackett's work is every bit as precise as Fishback's, cleanly maneuvering the small ensemble through tight, tense formations. "Silence" is super fresh—get it while it's hot!

*"You Will Experience Silence," April 10, 11, 17 & 18 at 10:00pm and April 21 & 22 at 8pm at Dixon Place, 161 Chrystie Street (between Rivington & Delancey), \$15, 212-219-0736, [youwillexperiencesilence.com](http://youwillexperiencesilence.com).*