



SEPTEMBER 27, 2005

## Theater This Week: Dorothy Parker, Dating, and Current Events

With the New York Musical Theatre Festival in its final week, we'll say no more other than to encourage you to try to get to one of the shows if you haven't already (or if you have!). Gothamist caught [Karen Mason](#) bringing [Dorothy Parker](#) back from the dead in *You Might As Well Live*, a solo performance comprised almost entirely of Parker's words set to music ([Norman Mathews](#) did the music and adaptation). Mason was the first Tanya (whichever ABBA member that is, we always get confused) in *Mamma Mia!* on Broadway and has plenty of other major shows under her belt, so you go in expecting top-notch singing and she doesn't disappoint; however, the storyline is a tad flimsy (Parker is on deadline, trying to find old bits of her writing to publish in a collection) and too often seems structured around nothing more than the aim to include Parker's choicest epigrams (you can lead a horticulture...). Still, the atmosphere evoked by the set is pleasingly noirish, and while Mason's voice has evidently not been roughed up the way Parker's must have been, given the quantities of alcohol and cigarettes Parker used, that's probably a good thing – it's lovely to listen to her give life to Parker's witticisms. Side note: Playbill.com has a good recent [interview](#) with Mason.



But let's move on from festivals, shall we, even though there seems to be at least a small one opening just about every week these days. On stage right now there's a glut of shows dealing with Middle East and terrorism-related issues, and for once, since images from Hurricane Katrina have so dominated recent news, maybe it won't feel quite so much like sitting down in front of the TV to go to these. First is the improbably subtitled *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Romantic Comedy*, which isn't a strict play per se but rather more a sketch comedy by Negin Farsad and Alexander Zalben, a k a [Madame Funnypants](#). Rather than the fractured fairytale/Romeo and Juliet-type story that we at first suspected, with a groan, that it would be, the show actually imagines the two sides in the saga as a troubled boyfriend and girlfriend, a characterization that doesn't seem all that wacky when you think about it, at least if you have a sense of humor.