



September 26 - October 4, 2006



Will the real Young Jean Lee please stand up? The downtown playwright-director is building a jittery, jagged body of work that resists pat definition—except as emotionally raw dispatches from an angry mind that lacerates itself as much as it does the world. To date, Lee has penned profane lampoons of motivational bromides (Pullman, WA) and the Romantic poets (The Appeal). Now she piles her deconstructive scorn upon ethnic stereotypes in *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*, a sweet-and-sour parade of Asian minstrelsy and race-baiting that culminates in a perverse, soul-baring love scene between two Caucasians. Like her avowed idol Andy Kaufman, Lee revels in personality mazes and narcissistic self-abasement. “People think of me as this empowered Asian female,” the playwright’s (unreliable) stand-in says. “But really I’m just a fucking white guy.”

Lee appears in a disturbing video at the top of the show being slapped in the face repeatedly. The onstage characters receive gentler treatment, and include a sassy Korean-American (Becky Yamamoto); the sly, traditionally dressed Koreans 1, 2 and 3 (Jun Sky Kim, Haerry Kim and Jennifer Lim); and the incongruous, angst-ridden White Persons 1 and 2 (avant-garde veterans Juliana Francis and Brian Bickerstaff). Eric Dyer’s set, an Asian-style wooden room lit by fluorescent lights, is an elegant, ascetic playroom. And Lee’s crudely effective direction brings out bold, unguarded work from the cast. Race has long been sacralized; it’s bracing to see it treated with flagrant contempt. But of course, only this fucking white guy would say that.

— David Cote