

'All Is Not' a worthy weave

By MICHAEL ECK

Special to the Times Union

GLENS FALLS — A man contemplates his thinning pate.

A woman searches her pocket-book for a dry-cleaning slip.

A husband and wife find themselves locked out of the house on a rainy night.

And a young boy taps on a microphone before beginning a speech about an ancient civilization.

On the face of it, Melissa James Gibson's "All Is Not" is about lost hair, a lost dress, lost keys and a lost tribe, but just beneath the surface it is a meditation about the deeper meanings of loss.

Gibson was commissioned to write the play for Adirondack Theatre Festival, and it is opening the troupe's five week-season in Glens Falls.

In the past, Gibson wrote an entry for ATF's "Five and Dime Plays," which was an evening made up of shorts.

In its own way, "All Is Not" is an evening of shorts, too. The four story lines are connected only in theme, but carefully woven around one another.

Theater review

"ALL IS NOT"

■ **When:** 8 p.m. Thursday

■ **Where:** Charles R. Wood Theater, 207 Glen St., Glens Falls

■ **Length:** 90 minutes

■ **Continues:** 8 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday; through July 1

■ **Tickets:** \$27

■ **Info:** 798-9663

■ **Web site:**
<http://www.atfestival.org>

The production is quite impressive. A steady rain trickles down the back wall of Eric Renschler's set — an overtly theatrical brace of scaffolding, well lit by Matt Frey, that allows for plenty of space while still establishing scenes, right down to the working dry-cleaning shop.

ATF Artistic Director Martha Banta directs the show, and she handles the pacing of Gibson's script, which requires some big tonal leaps, with grace.

Banta also has a generally strong cast that features excellent performances from Haerry Kim as dry cleaner Kyung-Soon and Rebecca Nelson as the wetted-down wife, Audrey.

Gibson's play, though, still needs some work.

The first half of the 90-minute show is riveting, as each set-up is established with a casual air that suggests, but doesn't telegraph, something bigger on the horizon.

Gibson eventually gets to that place, but the journey is occasionally mired in useless detail, and nearly sidetracked by a number of running gags — the way Richard describes his daughter's age by holding out a hand to suggest her height; Chad's habit of using "air quotes;" Arthur's penchant for over-enunciating, and so on.

In a way each story is an extended aphorism, but Gibson would need to surrender to brevity to achieve the desired effect.

That does not mean this world premiere is not worth seeing.

It is given, as noted, an excellent visual production with strong acting (Malcolm Morano's Chad is a bit thin, but so is the part).

More than that, it is a chance to see one of the area's most adventurous theater groups doing what it does best — new work.

ATF has already helped birth a number of shows — "Fully Committed," "It Goes Without Saying," "Mimi Le Duck" — that have found legs beyond Glens Falls.

With a little trimming and reshaping (Melissa, you don't have to be funny all the time), "All Is Not" could do the same.