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## 'Katie Roche' and 'The Book of Magdalene' Reviews: A Pair of Saints

The Mint Theater Company streams a 2013 production of Teresa Deevy's little-known play; Houston's Main Street Theater puts on a dystopian drama by Caridad Svich.



By [Terry Teachout](#)

Feb. 18, 2021 5:46 pm ET

Caridad Svich, whose work is regularly performed by regional theaters all over America, currently has three plays streaming, or about to open, at the same time: “The Book of Magdalene” at Houston’s Main Street Theater, “Theatre: A Love Story” at Cincinnati’s Know Theatre, and “Red Bike” at the Unicorn Theatre in Kansas City, Mo. “The Book of Magdalene,” the most ambitious of the trio, is a nocturnal exercise in magical realism, a pandemic-themed updating of the biblical story. Len (Jennifer Wang), the title character and protagonist, is a quietly melancholy young woman who makes a living at phone sex in a dystopian big-city world where people are no longer permitted to touch one another—they are separated by translucent plastic screens—and cannot even remember what it felt like to do so: “My elder tells me stories sometimes, but I don’t know if they’re true.” In the course of the evening, we see her talking and drinking with Ru (Mariam Albishah), her girlfriend; looking after Elder (Maria Schenck), her mother; “servicing” Suit (Pablo Bracho), one of her telephonic clients; and searching for a kind of faith that has been severely tested by the present moment.

Symbolism-intensive and purposefully poetic in diction, “The Book of Magdalene” is not the sort of play to which I ordinarily warm, but its stageworthiness is self-evident, and Amelia Rico, the director, and Afsaneh Aayani, the set designer, have served Ms. Svich outstandingly well. Good cast, good costumes, and a giant insect puppet whose unexpected appearance (in both senses of the word) will startle you. Even if you don’t care for magical realism on or off stage, you should consider giving this one a shot.