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**AP** Associated Press

## Play examines dangers of love on campaign trail

By JOCELYN NOVECK, AP National Writer  
Tuesday, February 22, 2011

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Carol Rosegg / AP

(02-22) 15:03 PST  
NEW YORK, (AP) --

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Whichever side you supported in the 1992 presidential race, it was hard not to be entertained by the famously bipartisan romance between political operatives [James Carville](#) and [Mary Matalin](#).

And that seems to be what the writers of "The Body Politic," a slight but generally enjoyable

play that opened this past Sunday at the 59E59 Theaters, are hoping we remember. In fact, they mention the celebrated couple twice.

As in:

### IMAGES



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"I don't know how they do it," says one campaign worker of Carville and Matalin.

"Or how often," replies another.

Ba dum bum.

But Spence and Trish, the couple at the center of "The Body Politic," are actually very little like their real-life counterparts. Yes, they work for opposing presidential candidates. But first off, there's a gender swap: He's a Republican, she's a Democrat.

Secondly, they are much less flamboyant than the real couple. And third, their sparring takes place not on the airwaves, but in private — in offices, backstage at campaign stops, in a hotel bar, and finally upstairs in a room, as they play a game called Political Strip.

Yes, we thought that would get your attention. Trish invents this highly political brand of foreplay, and we actually see it twice — once in the heady early moments of their courtship, and then a bit later, when things have gotten a little tense.

The tension is not, unfortunately, wholly of the sexual variety. It comes from the efforts of both campaigns to exploit the affair, via risky pillow talk, to the great peril of the

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participants.

Will love — or at least, toxically dangerous infatuation — triumph over political ambition? Or you could look at it the way the couple's more cynical colleagues do: What's one little affair, when a national campaign is at stake?

Although the dialogue is uneven — sometimes insightful and sometimes a little pat — a talented cast of six provides an entertaining look at a campaign in action. [Darren Kelly](#) and [Brian Dykstra](#) have the requisite bluster as dueling governors, and [Leslie Hendrix](#), as a comically imperious campaign aide (her name is Brunhilda, for Pete's sake) rightfully steals most of the laughs, though a few are taken by her overly intense Democratic equal, played by Michael Puzzo.

Matthew Boston and Eve Danzeisen, as Spence and Trish, are earnest and appealing, and often funny. Yet they deserved more help from playwrights Richard Abrons and Margaret Perry (Perry directed, as well) in fleshing out their characters. Their political views are pretty much all we know about them — well, other than the fact that Trish is packing some seriously pretty lingerie under those power suits.

The production comes through, though, at the end with a final scene that is surprising, well played and charming. Who knows, maybe love can flourish even in the slippery world of presidential politics. Look at Carville and Matalin, now married with kids, still disagreeing happily, from all appearances. It worked out OK for them.

"The Body Politic," a production of the At Hand Theatre Company, runs through March 6.

Online: <http://athandtheatre.com>

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