

Ari Mondry

*Lombardi* Review

*Lombardi* at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater impressed me quite a bit. I was amazed at how big the Quadracci Powerhouse Theater could be, and surprised at how much action could be happening coherently on stage at once. *Lombardi* was written by Eric Simonson, adapted from David Maraniss's book *Lombardi: When Pride Still Mattered*. The play told the story of Vince Lombardi, the man, as opposed to Vince Lombardi, the coach, or Vince Lombardi, the legend. It offers a thorough, zoomed-in look at Vince Lombardi on the field and at home. Chiefly, the play explores his dysfunctional relationship with his wife Marie and his iron-fisted coaching of his team. It's shown mostly through the perspective of Michael McCormick, a fictional journalist who does an investigative story on Lombardi. Lee Ernst was fantastic as Lombardi, with the loud trademark voice, posture and grin. The character chemistry, however volatile, between Vince and Marie Lombardi was very real, which must have been hard to do, as most of their dialogue was yelling. This play showed some of the most outrageous set work I've ever seen. The set was gigantic, creative and vibrant. Without any major layout changes, Lambeau Field easily became the Lombardis' living room. The space was ample for the show, and the practice field lent a very arena-like vibe to the Powerhouse Theater. Sound was loud, colors were bright, costumes were period, and everything in the play seemed to have the camp of the 1960s. There was a huge amount of action happening on stage many times in the show. There were fully padded football players running through the set doing drills, cheerleaders doing choreographed routines, the set pieces for transitions coming up through trap doors, just a whole lot of movement and action. It was a very stimulating, active play and I'd recommend it to anyone who likes football, the theatre, Vince Lombardi or a good show.