



August 16, 2008

2008 New York International Fringe Festival

Tim Gunn's Podcast (a reality chamber opera)

**** **(four stars)** Jeffrey Lependorf's droll, musically witty chamber piece is an unlikely crossbreed between the genres of opera, a high art best enjoyed when one is low, and reality television, a low art best enjoyed when one is high. Classical baritone John Schenkel plays Tim Gunn, the plummy fashion adviser on Bravo's Project Runway; Lependorf has taken one of Gunn's podcasts—detailing various minor dramas in a season-three competition to outfit Miss USA—and set it to comically overscaled music. Schenkel's voice is commanding, his diction excellent, and his hand gestures appropriately fussy throughout his hour-long solo recital (accompanied by the composer on piano). Tim Gunn's Podcast may be little more than a stunt, but it is an elegant one. Neither Lependorf nor Schenkel pushes the joke into overblown mockery: They land the jokes without overshooting the Runway.—Adam Feldman, Theater Writer