



LA Theatre Review

Presents



The HollywoodFRINGE Daily Rag

Day Five

Monday, June 21, 2010

Brownsville Bred at Theatre of NOTE

by Vince Duvall~

Wanna catch some holy ghost? Get yourself to the Theatre of NOTE – which seems to be cranking out quality solo shows by the way (also today *The Packer* with Jay Ryan) - and see Elaine Del Valle's inspired, heartfelt and emotionally driven journey back to Brownsville where she came of age. That's right, Brownsville Brooklyn NYC, population 20 thousand blacks, 17 Puerto Ricans – and she was one. The streets are paved with crack bullets and to cross safely you pretend to know someone named Tanya on the other side, you're lucky if you've ever been to a place called "vacation," and Scarface is one of your favorite films.

It's an innocent and sensitive perspective on a family broken by drugs, a summer in Puerto Rico, High school auditions, love "like someone pitched a tent in your head and then moved in," becoming a woman and all things Puerto Rican.

Sexy, classy and openhearted, I believed and rooted for her from the start. And while some of the colorful characters in her wake might not be hugely developed, no one in the audience seemed to care. We laughed with her, we cried for her and really hoped that, despite a whole heartache of scary challenges, somehow her optimistic spirit, honesty and tough skin might get her through it all. And it looks like it has. A life full of meaning, she's the "center of a tootsie pop" and, you know what, if someone bought her a tiger, I bet she would know how to treat them.

ONLY TWO DAYS LEFT - *Brownsville Bred* plays June 26th-2:15pm and June 27th-12pm

Shiny White Diamonds at Theatre of Arts

by Sylvia Blush ~

Twin siblings Jem (Natalie Miston) and Trav's (Russell Sams) reunite after a ten year separation. Living alone with

her life size Dummy (Kat Valentina), Jem is grappling with the effects of pain medication she does not like taking. Trav's, ineffectively is keeping a secret from his sister as an unwelcomed stranger appears at Jem's door. Slowly the secrets are revealed and more mysteries develop.

Upon entrance we were welcomed with the entrancing melodies designed by Ed Matiuzzi; you can almost smell the incense. Splitting center is a wooden chair, short table with a couple of props, and a green love seat with a fantastically laid out dummy which is set pre-show. Immediately, it sets the eerie tone for this short play.

Sarah Doyle, playwright and director, has an ambitious piece that needs fine tuning. Borrowing ideas from Theatre of the Absurd and Greek tragedies, Doyle's *Shiny White Diamonds*, is too broad for its hour length showcase. The story often strays from one characters point of view to another and the characters are not fully developed. Odd directorial choices were made as well which confused the story further. If it weren't for Kim Jackson's seasoned chops, the character Claudia seems indispensable.

Shiny White Diamonds runs Mon 6/21 9:30pm, Wed 6/23 10pm, Fri 6/25 7:30pm

They Call Me Mr. Fry at The Lounge 2 Theater

by Tony Bartolone~

A man faces his short comings as a human being against the harsh reality of the youth at an inner-city school. A familiar story, but an interesting perspective on it. I have to admit I had my doubts well in to the half hour mark as Jack Fry (who portrays himself) sputtered silly lines, but those doubts faded.

As the story became less about puns and one-liners and more about Fry's real life relationships with the kids he taught, I became more and more intrigued and finally enthralled. The thing that sets his portrayal of a teacher pit against troubled students apart from similar tales is Fry's ability to touch on a

single human attribute, cowardice. Constantly wanting to quit, he even seemed self-involved at times, which actually made him feel real and easy to relate to. This brings up an interesting question about teachers. How much of their own life can they have before their students become intrusive?

There were points at which the piece was drab and tedious, but ultimately it was a rewarding account of how life has no plan, but plenty of lessons. See it Tuesday, June 22 at 8p.m. or Saturday, June 26 at 2p.m.

***Deicide: A Sorta Musical* at The Paul G. Gleason Theater**

by Tatyana Gelfond~

Toward the middle of Michael Ciriaco and Brandon Baruch's play *Deicide: A Sorta Musical*, Michael (our hero), played by Michael Ciriaco, proselytizes his new invented religion "Science" to his congregation, a.k.a, the audience. "The people who believed in smart things were called liberals. The people who believed in the stupid things were in charge of everything else." Michael preaches these words of wisdom, post-death of his grandfather, Pope (previous evangelist, and leader of Newtopia) who died from watching Quill (the town sex pot) dressed in dominatrix alfit give allegorical head to a banana.

Foyle (Daniele Manzin) who plays Michael's arch-nemesis was a comedic dynamo. One thing is certain--this man can do one mean musical number.

Deicide's biblical connotations were pertinent, as Michael hangs on a cross, betrayed by his disciples, while his lover, and mother of his newborn baby, Tizzie (Lizzie Adelman) clips off his fingernails with cardboard pliers.

Newtopia, the futuristic society, and setting of Ciriaco, and Baruch's play employs the raunchiness of The Benny Hill Show, particularly in the beginning scene, when Pope, after spreading the gospel of mumblecore from his cardboard pulpit, proceeds to rub his face, in the chest of three-fourth's, of the scantily clad female cast. Again and again, a question comes to mind. Why in this world of God vs. Science are these characters in their underwear?

Deicide: A Sorta Musical plays June 22 - June 26th.

***Head Over Heels* at Comedy Sportz L.A.**

by Rachel Stoll ~

Coeurage Theatre's production of *Head Over Heels* is composed of 17 individual scenes that are tied together with the themes of love and self discovery. Writer Eric Czuleger's decision to break the story into mostly individual monologues with the exception of two scenes is interesting, and allows for the themes to be discovered through all of the characters. Actress Kirsten Kuiken who plays the role of "Eve" (yeah, that eve) is the only character that repeats in the 17 scenes, and she does a fantastic job exploring the main themes within her character. Eve's journey into existence and understanding is not only entertaining, but also touches on the deeper questions of humanity's purpose. Although the piece starts off feeling disjointed and potentially awkward, Czuleger's presentation works very well for the stories he is trying to tell. The lighting design works very well for the, as does the minimalist and versatile set.

June 17, 7pm - June 20, 1pm - June 21, 9pm

***pink champagne* at Elephant Theatre Space**

by Rachel Jenkins~

5 Mathilde [Dylan Jones], a wannabe Broadway ingénue past her prime takes on her midlife crisis by undergoing hypnosis to take herself through her past lives & the musical numbers that accompanied them. A self-proclaimed one-woman show that needed 4 additional actors to be performed.

Walking in to actors warming up on stage, it appeared as if the show was planning on satirizing cabaret. However, the cast seemed unclear if this was the direction they all wanted. In mockery or not, every number in music, lyrics & choreography was consistently stumbled. This, followed by stumbled lines, makes one question why the play was happening at all. The past lives of Mathilde teach her why she should be happy with who she is today. Though the timeline left us wondering how the past lives could have all been lived by the same woman. Most disappointing was the lack of stage presence which left the theatre [and the audience] feeling empty. The saving grace in pink champagne was the young mustached [female] brunette who managed to perform & sing with style giving the audience at least someone to look forward to stepping into the spotlight.

pink champagne is a one woman musical review with too many actors & not enough singers. A long 50 minutes that leaves the audience with at least the positive reminder of the importance of self discovery & finding out you are usually the

person you've been looking to complete yourself all along.

pink champagne plays June 23 at 9:30pm & June 26 at 3:30pm.

5