



# LA Theatre Review

Presents



## The HollywoodFRINGE Daily Rag

Day Four

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### **LA Lights Fire from the Coeurage Theatre Company at Comedy Sports**

by James Bean~

*LA Lights Fire* is one of those shows that is talked about by the way it affected its audience. You don't necessarily squibble about every single problem that finds itself onstage, but instead it becomes easy to focus on how the audience found themselves almost changed by the experience.

At its core, *LA Lights Fire* is a series of monologues that deal with the residents of LA during the catastrophic fire season a few years ago. The script was alive, fresh, and something that new playwright Eric Czuleger can be incredibly proud of. The actor, Joe Calarco (oh yes, did I not mention that this is a one man show?) flows through an encyclopedia of characters during his hour-long journey on the stage, and although some characters did not ring as true as others, every single one had a story to tell, and I was ready to listen. From agent to actor to stoner to squirrel, this guy simply had it all, and he did an incredible job keeping the audience spellbound as he breathed life into every single character that he brought to that stage.

The lighting and music choices were also excellent, and a small break was even taken for a short movement and light piece, which in itself was quite beautiful. In short, it is a visceral, gorgeously written set of mind-bending monologues performed by a terrific actor. You won't go wrong with *LA Lights Fire*.

*LA Lights Fire* will be at Comedy Sports again on June 20th at 5 PM

### **Pot! the Musical at Comedy Sportz**

by Melissa Marie Watson ~

*Pot! the Musical* is absolutely absurd and completely hilarious. The credit of the show really goes to the set designer (Michael McGee) and costume designer (Anthony Tran). The set being transforming shapes covered in lime green shag carpet straight out of the 1970's, which sets the tone focusing on that controversial green herb. The many many many costume changes in this one hour and change show are always green but distinctively different. The musical numbers all focusing around what else, Pot, range from Broadway style show tunes, rocking melodies, and gospel. The only drawback is that the show does not end on an ultra high note usually expected at the end of a "Broadway themed" musical. It ends abruptly as we watch the cast leave with the set, no bows or time for applause.

It's a show not only with a theme but fighting for a cause with side-splitting laughs induced by an outstanding cast.

*Pot! the Musical* Plays: June 18 at 7:00pm, June 19 at 1:00pm & 5:00pm, June 22 at 9:00pm June 27 at 1:00pm at Comedy Sportz and June 26 at 11:30pm at Theatre of Arts

### **Betty at Theatre Asylum**

by K. Primeau~

It is undeniable that Kelly Dawn Malloy, the buxom blonde portraying Paramount starlette Betty Hutton in the play by the same name, has a good deal of charm. During a fake press conference (in which the audience plays the Media), Malloy smiles her way through life stories riddled with dysfunctional marriages, casting couches (or in this case, trains), and performances on table tops for bootleggers. USO tours and tales from Hollywood studio's heydays paint a romantic landscape for the rambunctious star to rise and fall. The piece is almost a hit, but the meandering structure (due as much to random audience participation as Malloy's tendency to seem flustered and forgetful) deflate the winsomeness. Going from question to response to seemingly randomly placed song, Betty's in a tizzy, and occasionally goes flat, sticks on nasal tones, and flails her limbs in part cute gesturing, part unsupported sound. Stronger stage movement and direction from the pieces' playwright and director, Shelby Bond, is left to be desired, as Malloy's presence still needs a deal of polish to shine.

June 20 @ 5:30PM, 21 & 22 @ 7PM and 27th @ 4PM @ Theatre Asylum

### **Kill Your Television @ Elephant Stages**

by K. Primeau~

When everyman Jeff Gardner enters the Elephant's richly transformed playing space and settles into his cushy recliner for an evening of television, the audience can't help but giggle at his dopey pajamas and monkey stuffed animal. Through movement and facial gestures alone, we see a man who, unlike us *theatre-goers*, is completely absorbed in his mediated existence full of ginormous remote controls, guilt-trip advertising, and absurd scenarios such as the premise of Doogie Howser, MD. When a freak electrical storm sandwiches Gardner between television land and "studio" audience reality, the nightmarish landscape and unfriendly games (complete with an incredibly discomfiting- and at times, glorious- light and soundscape) somehow change him. I must have missed the dramatic impetus, but as soon as he rewinds his existence and, amidst arabesques and raining popcorn, destroys his television, the tables are turned. A soundtrack of projected responses to the play is heard ("That was crap," "I hope this show gets good reviews"),

as Gardner stares out at the us, prodding the audience to consider what they just settled in to watch. The self-reflexive piece of multi-media theatre is engaging and intriguing, if not yet fully-evolved, and is definitely not for those sensitive to strobe lights or loud sound.

June 20 @ 7PM, 23 @ 8PM and 26 @ 2PM @ Elephant Stages

### ***Eco-Friendly Jihad at Theatre of NOTE***

by Sylvia Blush ~

Irish born comedian, Abie Philbin Bowman, nearly had me rolling in the aisle when he said the one good thing about George W. Bush was his reflexes during the flying shoe press conference. "If Kennedy had reflexes like that, this would be a different country." As the mixture of laughter and groans filled the theatre Bowman replied, "What? Too Soon." Unfortunately, the sixty minute stand up set had roughly ten minutes of strong material.

*Eco-Friendly Jihad*, is based on musings Bowman has devised from realizing that joining Al Qaeda would be better than let's say dropping bombs on Darfur or nuking the free world. As he paces downstage center, wired mic in hand, he offers solutions on the ongoing threat of global warming: "...the major causes of climate change are airlines, oil companies and overpopulation. Al Qaeda is tackling all three...Suicide bombers are biodegradable."

Bowman undermines his own wit too often by explaining the origins of his jokes instead of trusting that we are on his side. The comparison of boy/girl relationships to that of humans and earth are provocative and quite hilarious, but the set up isn't strong enough to hold our attention.

That being said, I would recommend seeing this show simply to enjoy musical parodies of two pop favorites including Gloria Gaynor's, "Earth Will Survive."

*Eco-Friendly Jihad* plays June 21 @ 8pm, June 23 @ 10:30pm, June 27 @ 8:30pm

### ***Mary Poppins is a BUTTERFLY at Art|Works Theatre***

by Ashley Steed~

Famed author of the *Mary Poppins* children's books P.L. Travers often said "thinking is linking." Meaning that everything is connected, no matter how tenuous the connections may seem. Writer and performer Suzan Averitt has taken this concept, linking Mary Poppins with the Virgin Mary, sexuality with spirituality, the comical with the serious. Averitt plays a delightfully charming and perceptive young girl named Mary who shares with us the way she sees the world and the way she sees the connections.

Hanging white strips of fabric serve as a discombobulated projection screen as well as a doctor's office with a metal table. The images and video projected support as well as juxtapose the themes and ideas that Mary rambles on about. The weakest part of the production is the voiceovers. Their purpose isn't fully realized and don't add anything to the piece.

Jeff G. Peters's direction is simple and light, allowing Averitt's unique storytelling to shine. Her characterization of the little girl is what keeps us invested – there's a delicate balance

**Everything Pertaining to Small Theatre in Los Angeles**

when playing a kid and Averitt does it with honest and comedic precision. Her writing is poetic, provocative, deep and funny. Although, at times, the connections aren't clear (which is probably the point) this short piece is definitely a unique experience.

This is the only performance for HFF. I hope that Ms. Averitt et al. will continue to develop the piece for future showings.

### ***Poor, Poor Lear at The Paul G. Gleason Theater***

by Tony Bartolone~

I was standing in a theatre lobby talking to my friend, Spencer about the records we found in the trash down on Sunset when out of nowhere an astronomical explosion of energy was thrust in to the room. That energy combustion was Nina Sallinen. Ready or not, there she was; weaving through crowd, cracking wise, saying hello to everybody.

I then sat in my seat and witnessed a true tour de force performance feat. Sallinen is astounding as a one-woman rendition of *King Lear* which gradually turns into more of a reflection on her own life, which she is nearing the end of. It is absolutely breath taking how she exudes so much energy and is at the same time so convincingly elderly and enfeebled.

After serving the audience sweets during intermission, Sallinen settles down to contemplate her life, and her place in the world. With the sugary sweetness of home-made cup cakes evaporating on my tongue, the elderly woman who bounced around stage, eliciting so much laughter proceeded to break my heart. I consider myself fortunate to have seen this unique, one-night-only experience.

### ***BURTON at Theatre of NOTE***

by Vince Duvall~

Concise, clever, alcoholically tragic. What better place to unleash Richard Burton's lurid confession than the Cahuenga Corridor - a stretch of city street that toasts the highest bar density in town. Welsh actor Rhodri Miles pours up a decent, metered characterization and quick furtive storytelling about Burton's strong sense of loyalty to a small patch of land (Pontrhydyfen-birthplace of several major stars) where, born second to last in a family of 13, drank his way through tuition to the stage and cared so much more about rugby than acting, that he kept a radio with the game on in the wings – got the final score from Gertrude in the last act of Hamlet. Victor Mature in a miniskirt, a visit from Churchill, many of his theatrical exploits and familial regrets.

Minimally staged (1 bottle), beautifully written by Gwynne Edwards and skillfully guided by Hugh Thomas, Miles neatly delivers a level chronology which, despite psychological commentary, perhaps lacks Burton's audacity. If "life was like art and art like life" (especially in his roles with Elizabeth Taylor -*Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf*) and "that was then and this is now," any weaker proof of *back then* might have Burton's own friends staggering down from Dillon's Pub up the street: "Aw com'on Rich, let's see how you really did it at the Old Vic." Still, insightful and a must for Burton fans.

*Burton* shows June 21<sup>st</sup> -7pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> -8pm, 24<sup>th</sup> -6pm and 25<sup>th</sup> -10pm

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