



LA Theatre Review

Presents



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British Invasion: Mark Allen's Go Slow @ IDA Hollywood

by K. Primeau ~

When British stand-up comic Mark Allen became more annoyed than disturbed at a suicide that hindered his daily commute, he decided to go off the grid and take things slow for a month. His hilarious tale of modern in-conveniences and tortoise-seeking shenanigans is full of witty gems ("When I post on Twitter and Facebook, my friends have my thoughts twice as much as I do") and honest revelations ("I'd become an asshole"). Affable and sweetly self-deprecating, Allen checks in with the audience when the British humor doesn't seem to land and ultimately proves that taking life slowly can be a challenging (and laughable) act of rebellion.

June 17-27th @ 6:30 PM @ IDA Hollywood.

Booth & Pat: Two Guys. One Guitar. No Standards at ComedySportz LA

by Freddy Puza~

In the internet sensation, "2 Girls 1 Cup," two girls do things to a cup and to each other that just shouldn't be done. Similarly, in *Booth & Pat: Two Guys. One Guitar. No Standards*, two guys do things to each other and to popular songs that just shouldn't be done, really. But in both cases, you can't help but want to see more.

Booth & Pat is a courageous blend of cabaret, stand-up and improv. The duo take popular songs ranging from the Beatles to the Spice Girls and parody them with their own unique mix of self-deprecation, dick and poop jokes, and a love of music combined with a tolerance of pop culture.

The one-hour show explores the friendship between Booth and Pat and their relationship to their careers and their various sexual encounters. While it didn't follow any strong thematic structures, I found their strong suit was in clever rendering of the pop songs and the way they pulled the songs together to tell a story. In their version of "Let It Be," Booth and Pat throw in all the songs that use the same chord progression.

The duo are clearly trained performers and singers who love what they do. My biggest concern was that I felt like they were playing for a bigger venue and didn't take advantage of the intimate space of a small theater.

Booth & Pat: Two Guys. One Guitar. No Standards plays June 21, 22 at 7 p.m., June 23 at 3 p.m., June 24 at 5 p.m. and June 25 at 9 p.m.

SHAHEED: The Dream and Death of Benazir Bhutto at The Open Fist

by Joel Elkins~

Shaheed is a one-woman, one-act show about a one-of-a-kind woman. Anna Khaja takes on the roles of eight separate characters: Benazir Bhutto herself and seven other people whom the two-time prime minister had touched in some way. In these vignettes we view through the eyes of Pakistanis the woman raised from infancy to take her father's place as leader of Pakistan.

We also encounter the diversity of Pakistan: the American student who feels she can finally be proud of her Pakistani heritage, the college professor who held "BB's" words in his heart as he was being tortured by the military authorities, the man on the street who heralds her return to Pakistan, and the young girl in the madrassa who vows to sacrifice herself and everything she has, in order to put an end to Bhutta and her "infidel" ways. The play pulls no punches, even discussing the charges of crime and corruption that have been leveled against her by her critics.

Khaja, who also wrote the script, gives a brilliant performance, managing to capture each character's distinct accent, mannerisms, character and passion. The play was directed by Heather de Michele.

Shaheed plays June 21 at 9:15 p.m., June 22 at 7:30 p.m., and June 27 at 2:00 p.m.

feeling sorry for roman POLANSKI at Theatre Asylum

by Sylvia Blush ~

Bink Waverly (Michael Whitney) has an incident at work making him question his wife Myrna's (Danielle Fink) ability to forgive him. She uses Polanski's past and current woes as an example of feeling for the "victim" in any situation and it isn't until her husband becomes a victim himself that she begins to feel for his woes.

Uncertain about the degree of sympathy I would develop for infamous film director Roman Polanski after watching the show, I quickly realized that the intriguing title served its purpose solely as a ploy to sell tickets. Playwright Sue Cargill fills the meat of the text with bad puns and gimmicky one-liners. Perhaps the most intriguing moment took place half way into the play and could be attributed to director Michael A. Stock's provocative staging of the dream sequence; all of which takes place in front of an upright bed (kudos to the set designer).

feeling sorry for roman POLANSKI does deliver a few chuckles. Whitney and Fink are worth watching as their characters struggle to get back to their normal middle class existence.

feeling sorry for POLANSKI runs Wed 6/23 - 10pm; Thu 6/24 - 5:30pm; Fri 6/25 - 8:30pm; Sat 6/27 - 8:30pm; Sun 6/27 - 2:30pm

Jesus: The Guantanamo Years at Theatre Asylum

by Rachel Stoll~

Abie Philbin Bowman is Jesus, who has come back to earth in order to put laughter back in religion. Jesus explains that he was originally aiming to be a comedian, but that his "material" was taken too seriously by his "fans". With this, he sets out on his mission and ends up being taken away to Guantanamo while trying to get through U.S. Immigration. All this is the set-up for Bowman's humorous political and social commentary about the War on Terror, torture, and foreign policy. *Jesus: The Guantanamo Years* was cleverly written and had a couple of musical numbers thrown in. The lighting/music design was simple and effective. This show works well and would probably be even more fun with a packed house full of energy.

June 18, 22 at 8:30 PM ?- June 20 at 5:30 PM ?- June 24 at 7:00 PM

A Picnic at the Asylum at the Hudson Theatre

by Marcus Kaye~

From the moment she steps onto the stage, Angela Neff has the audience in the palm of her hand, or rather, in the seat of her father's woody. Neff's stage presence alone is reason enough to see *A Picnic at the Asylum*. Factor in her seamless character transitions, a darkly comedic story, and a compelling examination of father/daughter relationships and what results is nothing short of a Hollywood Fringe hit.

Bravely portraying her bi-polar father, pregnant mother and 6 other siblings, Neff paints a fascinating picture of suburban life with her manic depressive dad. Through AA, asylum picnics and birthday dinners, the audience grows up with Neff, clearly seeing how she could both love and hate her father.

Neff's mannerisms are so distinct, that she is able to fluidly transition between her multitude of personalities by simply changing gesture. While other one-man shows rely on costumes or dialogue to mark the transition, it is Neff's physicality here that does the trick.

The story hits the dramatic highs and lows of Neff's childhood without ever dragging or feeling redundant. Expertly written and full of surprises, the script is pitch perfect.

A Picnic at the Asylum plays June 19 at 5pm, June 20 and 25 at 8pm and June 22 and 23 at 9:30pm at the Hudson Theatre.

The Funeral Crasher at ComedySportz LA

by Ashley Steed~

Stacy Mayer's one-woman show is a collection of stories about death and funerals. In interesting idea, however it is underdeveloped.

Everything Pertaining to Small Theatre in Los Angeles

After a traumatic car accident, it seems she's got a penchant for death. Drawn to dark and twisty humor she begins interviewing people about their experiences at funerals. One person whom she draws inspiration from is a Buddhist comic who philosophizes about death.

The main thing that is lacking from this show is the why-factor. Why are these stories being told? Eventually Mayer reveals that all these interviews have still not prepared her for death. A story arch concept that is never fully realized. Also, the title of the play is misleading. Funeral crasher implies that she "crashes" funerals – i.e. showing up to random funerals uninvited. Now that would be a funny story.

Mayer's heart is in the right place. As herself she is lovely and quirky and I adore her simple "I'm just talking to you" vibe, but her character work needs a lot of improvement. That's where strong direction would have helped. Again, the show is an interesting idea, but that's all it is. If it's ever going to become a show worth crashing, it's going to need a lot more work.

The Funeral Crasher has one last performance at ComedySportz LA on June 25 at 5:00 PM.

On The Blvd at the ComedySportz Theatre

by Rachel Jenkins ~

Dave has been evicted from his apartment by his sympathetic landlord. Dave's friend Mitch was kicked out of his place by his boyfriend (again). A middle aged southern man takes a trip to Hollywood (family in tow) to fulfill a journey he wished he had made with his own father. They all collide on Hollywood Boulevard as each comes to life through actor Matt DeNoto.

On The Blvd noted to be in 'early development' was performed in a small black box with almost nothing on stage. This one-man show was able to make its way through this new work, uncluttered, allowing both actor & audience to focus on the text. The stories were simplistic, not trying to be anything or force a message. They simply were. Resulting in continuous laughter & contemplation.

DeNoto worked hard jumping from character to character. However, any real change in physicality between characters was lacking. The lack of specificity hindered the already clunky transitions between characters, especially when they needed to happen quickly.

On the Blvd is a cute exploration of the stories that make up a day on Hollywood Boulevard. A work in progress in need of tightening that took great advantage of the HFF audience, imploring them to stay & discuss, in hopes of making a fun project great. As one character states, despite everyone in the world being piled on top of each other Hollywood Blvd is still the loneliness place on earth. *On the Blvd* shows us that maybe, well, it's not.

No remaining performances.

State of Theatre in LA: Critic's Panel Discussion

LATR invites you to join us for a FREE closing day panel discussion with fellow critics from the LA Theatre scene. Panel begins at 1pm at Fringe Central on June 27th.

See our coverage online at www.LATheatreReview.com