



# LA Theatre Review

Presents



## The HollywoodFRINGE Daily Rag

Day Three

Saturday, June 19, 2010

### *The Fantasticks* at The Complex Theatres

By Bree Long~

Christopher Chase directs a tight little production of the longest running show in American Theatre history. This block box interpretation of *The Fantasticks* is centered around two neighboring parents who put up a wall between their houses to ensure that their children fall in love, since children typically do exactly what their parents forbid. Once the children have fallen head over heels, they discover the well-intentioned plotting of their parents and set off on their own paths to experience the ways of the world.

The plot is aided by the help of some periphery characters, most notably in this production, by Setareh Khatibi, who never utters a word as *The Mute*. Khatibi's fluid physicality and spot on timing make her a highlight of the show. She's got a great face, full of expression and intensity of presence. I could not take my eyes off of her. The cast hits their stride in Act 1 with 'It Depends on What You Pay.' It's just about this time that Darryl Maximilian Robinson gives the show a shot in the arm with his high energy, over the top Henry. Robinson is a comedian, clearly comfortable on the stage and well trained. His Henry is quite simply a hoot and expertly delivered. The Second Act reaches its fever pitch with 'Round and Round,' when young Louisa, played by Madison Mitchell, finally gets into her groove with the support of the show's narrator, El Gallo, played by Christopher Karbo. Mitchell struggles with some pitch problems earlier on, but relaxes into her moment with the help of the chemistry she shares with Karbo in this number. The rest of the company brings the piece home with a delightful lightheartedness that you can't help but smile about.

The set is rough and minimalist while the score is held together only by percussion and keyboards, but both work just fine in such a small space.

*The Fantasticks* plays June 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27 at 7:30 P.M.

### *4 Clowns* at Art/Work Theatre

by Freddy Puza~

From the depths of the infinite past before time, the stories of four clowns –? the sad clown, the mischievous clown, the angry clown and the nervous clown –? were brought to life on stage at the

Art/Work Theatre.

Each clown reveals the background of why they are who they are through a series of personal stories following the major phases of a person's life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. Their dramatic, chaotic and often dark stories remind us why humanity invented comedy in the first place: Life is painful and then you die so why not laugh and smile a little in between.

*4 Clowns* was a great mixture of drama, melodrama, musical, physical comedy and improv. The play was produced by Alive Theatre and Diane Christensen. The cast was incredibly tight as an ensemble and played well off of one another which was essential since many of the scenes involved literally grinding against each other's bodies or simulating copious amounts of sexual acts. The physicality of the actors was one of the most exciting things to watch and was definitely one of the essential storytelling tools.

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The musician also was an intricate part of the cast. Her music and sound effects set the actors in motion and were in rhythm with the dynamic vision of the show. The show wouldn't have been the same without her.

*4 Clowns* plays June 18, 24 and 25 at 8 p.m. and 19 and 26 at 2 p.m.

### *Face the City* at The Complex's Ruby Theatre

by Sylvia Blush ~

This multi-media one man show written and performed by Jesse Wilson is an autobiographical story about adolescent angst and societal labels. Along the way we learn about the endearing relationship between four friends and their quirky ritual of burying very personal items atop the hills of Hollywood.

Either nearly a full house or opening night jitters had the actor flustered and stuttering at times throughout the show. His shining moments included capturing the heart of the story through his multiple character portrayals. Wilson's writing is honest and open. The text tends to ramble, however, as there is constant mention of 'the night' without ever truly divulging or manifesting into a realization. What could have been the most vulnerable moment in the piece was unfortunately upstaged by the swerving video footage and the live voice over done behind a curtain. At times the video projected onto the screen behind Wilson did not match the text. I found it jarring and ineffective. The animated music

video, however, was quite charming and served the play well.

*Face The City* plays June 19th, 4:00 pm & 7:30pm.

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### Back to You: A Dear John (Mayer) Letter at ComedySportzLA

by Melissa Marie Watson ~

A busy night for Brianne Hogan who wrote, directed, produced and starred in this original production. Have you ever wondered if a person was born arrogant or was made that way through success or self-delusion? That is the key question posed to the audience of *Back to You: A Dear John (Mayer) Letter*.

The play revolves around taking pot shots at "John Mayer" played by Martin Lindquist, as we follow him on his search for his long lost love and muse. Along the way discovering the "true" inspiration for his lyrics. If you prefer reality TV to the theatre, have Twitter and Facebook mobile updates or plan your day around TMZ then this may just be the show for you. It is not laugh out loud funny but is saturated with ironic pop culture humor.

The set was uncomfortably small in comparison to the size of the actors and the suggestions of the settings tended to blur between location and time period.

*Back to You: A Dear John (Mayer) Letter* plays June 17 and 18 at 9:00, June 19 and 20 at 3:00pm June 19 at 11:00pm

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### The Wolf Girls at the Lounge Theatre

by Ashley Steed~

The moon shines across the night sky. Sounds of crickets and lightly rustling leaves fill the night air. There's a howl in the distance. Turning towards the howl you see a... girl? In fact, there's an entire pack of girls. Wolf girls. No, no no. Totally unacceptable – they need to be reformed into proper young ladies – From Lycan to I can! Quick! Only the nuns can save them, naturally.

This hilarious tale based loosely on Karen Russell's imaginative short story *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* (adapted by Ben Lewis) is charmingly clever and, simply, a lot of fun. The ensemble of wolves is a delight to watch as they transform (well most of them) from wild animals to proper young ladies. Standouts are Julie Civiello as the alpha wolf Jeanette who swiftly excels at becoming a lady (you know, walking and talking – the whole shebang) and Claudette as the tenderhearted she-wolf who just wants to go home. The nuns are perfect foils – The ferocious Sister Josephine (Christine Breihan) and the amiable Sister Maria (Lisa Reynolds). Although Misha Reeves as the elderly and hard-of-hearing Saint Lucy is only on stage for two minutes, she'll make you piddle in your pants just a little. Overall, each performance is nuanced and fully committed under the leader of the pack, director Alexis Bloom.

Everything Pertaining to Small Theatre in Los Angeles

*The Wolf Girls* plays at the Lounge Theatre June 18, 24 at 6:30 PM; June 19 at 2:00 PM; June 21, 22 at 10:30 PM

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### The Event at The Paul G. Gleason Theatre

by Tony Bartolone~

Need Theater's production of *The Event* by John Clancy was firmly written and acted. The minimal set (one chair) allowed the words to resonate in this sprawling one-man piece. The show was more than aware of itself as an event and it's audience as people loosely connected to it. *The Man* (played by Paul Dillon) goes on tangents about various subjects brought about by the philosophical ideas of theatrical performance.

Every word was placed with precision by Clancy, and every line was delivered with pinpoint accuracy by Dillon. The first fourth of the play *The Man* stood in one spot and simply delivered lines while constantly reminding the audience he was only reciting words that had been memorized. The play took a solemn turn when *The Man* reflected on how empty the modern world can make one feel.

*The Event* hits home with astute observation and prudent commentary. This thought-provoking introspective on performance and life in an often isolating society is an event not to be missed.

3 See it Saturday, June 19 at 8:30p.m. and Thursday, June 24, Saturday, June 26 and Sunday, June 27 at 7:30p.m

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### That's funny. You didn't sound black on the phone at The Complex

by Rachel Stoll ~

Jacquetta Szathmari's *That's funny. You didn't sound black on the phone* is a humorous narrative told about personal events that deeply impacted the writer/performer's life. Divided into three acts, the first act covers race and "giving up on black people" which is cleverly written and performed. The second act is based around "The Preppy Handbook" and shifts the focus away from race and onto on socio-economics. Although not as solid as the first two, the third act speaks on religion. These three themes seem disjointed, but work together as a larger story of self-discovery and self-fulfillment.

The set and lights are simple but effective, and Szathmari gave a clear and comedic performance. *That's funny. You didn't sound black on the phone* show is worthwhile and clever; especially the first two acts which felt more lived-in and rehearsed.

Hudson Theatres - June 22, 23 at 8:00 PM - Complex Theatres - June 18, 19, 25, 26 11:00 PM - Fringe Central June 19 at 3:30 PM

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