



# LA Theatre Review

Presents



## The HollywoodFRINGE Daily Rag

Day Twelve - After The Fact

Monday, June 28, 2010

### **True West Girl at The Lounge Theatre**

by Robert Axelrod~

As one person shows go, *True West Girl* stands out for its sheer maintenance of manic energy. Writer/Performer Barbara Bragg traces her pioneer family back to her grandfather when Wyoming was still a territory. She assays her life from early youth to womanhood with a stream-of-consciousness intensity that is both disturbing and hard to follow. The overall result is something like AM radio: if you don't like what's playing, wait a minute, something else will come on.

Bragg begins by imitating a hoot owl on a wooden box that serves as a perch, as well as many other things during the ninety minute saga, and goes on to portray the characters associated with her thirteenth birthday party. Her imitation of her cigarette sucking mother is hilarious. She's the most coherent when she calms down and depicts her life working for politician Dick Cheney. The chapter is very effective. Her section on love making (her first time? I couldn't tell.) is both funny and touching (take the pun!).

Bragg professes, "I remember everything. Does that make me insane?" This reviewer doesn't think so. In final assessment, Bragg's *True West Girl* (directed by Debra De Liso by the way) is more performance art than autobiography. The evening produces a catharsis of life, like a long labor and childbirth. Bragg delivers!

Reviewed on its final performance at The Lounge Theatre, 6201 Santa Monica Blvd, Hollywood.

### **Spencer Pratt Must Die at Fringe Central**

by Geoff Hoff~

Until I saw this production, I had no idea who Spencer Pratt was. For those others of you in the same boat, he is a minor celebrity, one of the "Bad Guys" from one of those horrible reality shows. Now I know. *Spencer Pratt Must Die* had some very interesting ideas in it. Many small marionettes manipulated by two people at the same time are well used to portray famous moments from television in years past. At one point, cell phones are used to light the faces of television producers. There was also a very funny bit where a werewolf (yes, a werewolf) is mesmerized by the spot on the floor from a laser pointer. Besides that the show is pretty much a mess. A producer on hard times decides the way to attract an audience is to kill someone on-air and puts an ad in Craig's List to find an assassin. The brilliant Paddy Chayefsky already covered this ground in the movie *Network*, but these three performers may be forgiven not knowing that as that movie probably came out before they were born.

This show combines *Network* with *Clockwork Orange*, *Mayberry RFD* and (I think) *Twilight*. It is also part disjointed improvisation, part badly timed comedy, part YouTube video vainly in search of virile success and part pointless audience participation.

At least two of the three performers may actually be good actors, but you'd never know it from this production, one which proves that the Hollywood Fringe is non-adjudicated.

### **Silken Veils at Art|Works**

by Rachel Stoll~

*Silken Veils* is an incredible piece of theatre. Creator Leila Ghaznavi uses puppets, light, poetry, music, and words to craft a moving piece about how political turmoil impacts families. Set in revolutionary Iran in 1979, *Silken Veils* tells the story of the revolution and the social aftermath in Darya's family. The use of puppets and silhouettes to tell the story is creative and feels so natural when watching the piece. *Silken Veils* is a stand-out piece with an amazing story and vision. The set is comprised mostly of luggage, which hold the puppets and props that Darya interacts with while reliving the turmoil of her youth. This piece is powerful and unlike most of the shows with its use of multimedia story telling.

June 24 at 10:30 PM - June 26, 27 at 5:00 PM - June 27 at 2:00 PM

### **Pagan Play at Art|Works and The Complex**

by Rachel Stoll~

*Pagan Play* is an experimental and conceptual piece that winds through its plot with creative movements and set changes. The plot is simple and involves a King trying to marry his daughter when he realizes that she is as beautiful as her dead mother. The daughter runs away and commends herself to God, hoping to not have to face her father's desire. The most interesting thing about *Pagan Play* is that it was a creative collaboration. Even more incredible is that this creative collaboration works and it is visible in the cast interaction on stage. Although the plot is not as strong as it could be, the play is a visual feast and a fantastic piece of collaborative theatre.

Complex Theatres - June 20, 27 at 2:00 PM

### **Snow White + Rose Red at the Open Fist Theatre Company**

by Rachel Jenkins~

The Open Fist presents a cute & quick (30 minute) adaptation of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale of two sisters with nothing in common but sisterhood. Targeted for children, it is filled with songs, fun & creative props, just enough exaggerated acting to keep a kid interested & just enough jokes only the grown ups will get to makes sure mommy & daddy have just as much fun as their kids.

The children are taken aside in the lobby by the Bear Prince to warn them about the evil dwarf & to implore them for their help throughout the show by screaming out to warn him whenever they see it. A great tactic to bring the children into the world and into the

theatre excited to be engaged and, better yet, involved. The space was well used by director Amanda Weier always keeping us looking for characters sneaking around its lofts & depths. The actors were collectively entertaining & demonstrating the best of their abilities, ready for anything to come out of their young audience. Including "IS IT OVER?!" to which Grandma (Conor Lane) in the most off beat & hilarious of manners responds, "almost!"

A fun family experience presented by the Open Fist Theatre Company with their first attempt at a child-targeted show. Engaging, interactive & funny for all. PLUS who doesn't love a show that provides arts & crafts to make finger puppets afterwards?

Unfortunately there are no more remaining performances.

---

### ***Eat, Pray, Laugh at Theatre Asylum***

by Marcus Kaye~

Borrowing her title from Elizabeth Gilbert's book about finding enlightenment in India, comedian Alicia Dattner's one-woman show tells the story of Dattner's excursion to India where she went looking for herself.

*Eat, Pray, Laugh* is set on an empty stage, with only a chair. Dattner humorously recounts her search for self in India, focusing on the comedic moments, like learning to use an Indian toilet and the multitude of mustaches on the Indians she encounters. She often recounts how many men were in love with her there that made her feel great, but not fulfilled.

Her quest for fulfillment is told in a straightforward manner. It is not unlike being in a living room somewhere, nodding along at each picture of the Taj Mahal, but secretly wishing for this story to end. With frequent tangents and conversational moments with the audience, *Eat, Pray, Laugh* hardly felt like a performance.

Dattner is charming, likeable and frequently funny, but the show as a whole never truly takes off. The story is interesting; it's the story-telling that needs polishing.

*Eat, Pray, Laugh* plays June 24 at 7pm, June 25 at 4pm, June 26 at 5:30pm and June 27 at 8:30 PM at Theatre Asylum.

---

### ***Wet Cookies at Theatre Asylum***

by Marcus Kaye~

*Wet Cookies* is the rare type of comedy show in which the laughter starts at the onset and continues, non-stop, for an hour. True, the show is only 45 minutes, but the first fifteen minutes spent out of the theatre will surely find audience members continuing to laugh at the multitude of comical moments in the show.

Whether they're imaging what would have happened if the Magic School Bus stopped in Nazi Germany, recounting the time they accidentally called their fourth grade teacher "mom," or holding a still pose for an absurd amount of time, the *Wet Cookies* sketches never fail to deliver. Notably funny was Mallie McCown's retelling of the thoughts of a monarch butterfly.

If these sketches sound bizarre on paper, it's only because they are. But the cast commendably makes each sketch memorable, true, and most of all- funny. The pace is quick and the laughs are big. Cleverly broken up into long and short sketches, *Wet Cookies* is a wonderfully devised little show.

Direction by Adam Sass and technical direction by Adam Griffith are top notch.

*Wet Cookies* plays June 19 at 5:30pm, June 20, 22 at 10pm, June

26 at 11:30pm, and June 27 at 7pm at Theatre Asylum and June 19 at 9:00 PM at i.O. West.

---

### ***Extropia at King King***

by Tatyana Gelfond

It's nice to see live theatre outside of the traditional 99-seat theatre, but I don't think a nightclub, was the ideal venue to view this show. Seated in front of a ginormous pillar that blocked off half the stage, *Extropia*, after a forty-minute delay, finally began with a jarring metronome, which left half the audience deaf. To say this production was cursed with extremely poor house management is an understatement.

*Extropia* was written as a collaboration by a Seattle based ensemble, Collaborator, and directed by Kelleia Sheerin.

The setting, a Dystopian Society, which bares a strong simulacrum to Ray Bradbury's, *Fahrenheit 451* where the concept of free-thinking human beings has become neolithic.

The play begins with Foster (Sam Littlefield) in bed. His head rests on top of a metallic pillow, next to his wife. Foster jolts up saying " I think I hear something." You see, *Extropia* is not only a shoe factory--it is also a world where music doesn't exist. Foster, much like the character of Guy Montag is woken up out of a dead existence, and begins to question his environment, the consequence of this is isolation. " I want to be part of the team," says Foster to Arial (Alexandra Fulton) his co-worker at the shoe factory, who also hears everyday noise as music.

Foster's dark night of the soul lacks any high stakes, therefore robbing *Extropia* of conflict. This leaves what could have been an engaging piece rather fluff.

---

### ***Mental Head Circus at the King King Theatre***

by Rachel Jenkins~

The curtain pulls back and we are bombarded by corsets, crinolines & high flying circus acts of such high caliber that even after reading the shows description you simply wouldn't expect. A little comedy & good choreography opened the show and continued throughout, consistently utilizing the space on & off stage. Purposefully full. Purposefully empty. Always directing our attention where we should be looking. Which was normally told the next high-flying acrobatic act. Each that told it's own unique story & dripped with talent. None so much, however, as an act performed by a man & a woman far off the stage on a blue ribbon hanging near the back wall. Beginning as a visually stimulating dance they made their way off stage to tell a fairly typical story of loving and leaving but in a new & breathtaking way that made you beg her to stay.

The aerial acts proceeded to be top notch taken up a peg with each performance. However, the pieces in between, often staged movement or choreographing, were often a let down becoming progressively boring as the excitement of the gravityless choreography increased. Instead of building momentum they often slammed the pacing to a halt.

A strong ensemble, a powerful soundtrack and beautiful displays of strength & talent make Mental Head Circus a must see combination of cabaret, circus & teased hairpieces that excites & moves you as if you were catching yourself falling from the sky alongside them.

Unfortunately this was their only performance.