



LA Theatre Review

Presents



The HollywoodFRINGE Daily Rag

Day Two

Friday, June 18

The Stories of César Chávez at Theatre Asylum

by Sylvia Blush ~

Written, performed, and produced by Fred Blanco, *The Stories of César Chávez* depicts possible moments during the civil rights activist fast of 1968. The play opens as Chávez (played by Blanco) is praying to La Virgen de Guadalupe (The Virgin Mary) for physical and spiritual strength as he fights for the California farm workers rights. His weakened state spawns hallucinations and believes La Virgen is talking to him.

Using social commentary as the main source of thematic schemes, Blanco has created an educational piece that may survive in academic circles. However, there is more to be desired if this play is to withstand a substantial run in the theatrical community.

Using varying characters to tell Chávez historical timeline serves the play well, but I was confused through transitions of characters as to when Blanco was speaking to the audience or La Virgen. Although his character work was vivid and clear they were not connected to the through line of the story.

Minimalistic in design, the set and costumes suited the play well, whereas lighting distracted focus away from poignant moments within the production.

The Stories of César Chávez plays June 18 at 10:00 pm, June 19 at 8:30 pm, June 20 and 21 at 7:00 pm, June 22 at 5:30 pm, June 24 at 10:00 am, and June 26 at 2:30 pm

The Most Dangerous Woman in America at Theatre of NOTE

By K. Primeau ~

Grab a "Simpler Times" Ale from Theatre of NOTE's full bar and saddle up for David Christie's smartly-written one woman show about hell-raising Mother Mary Harris Jones. Therese Diekhans' charming, studied performance playfully brings to life fifteen characters, from children mill workers to John D. Rockefeller, as the audience learns the true cost of Big Business cost-cutting in early 20th century mining towns. Mother Jones' rallying speeches on apathy and revolution are particularly poignant amidst contemporary woes, while original music by Jerry Reynolds and clear, active direction by Carol Roscoe maintain an environment of engaging theatricality. Pay attention, the jump between characters happens quickly, but kudos to Diekhans for mastering multiple dialects while filling each with the strongest of intentions, good and bad.

June 18 @ 8 PM (Fringe Central), June 19 @ 4:15 PM, June 21 @ 10 PM, June 22 @ 6 PM (Theatre of NOTE)

Defending Against Eros: Three One Act Plays at the East Theater at The Complex

by Joel Elkins~

Defending Against Eros is a collection of three short one-act plays based on the painting "A Young Girl Defending Herself Against Eros" by Bouguereau. Producer Gwendolyn Dreyer developed the idea specifically for the Hollywood Fringe Festival and enlisted three local writers to take on the task.

The plays are ostensibly presented in order from the most literal to the most metaphysical, but, in my opinion, also progress in strength, both of composition and performance.

In the first – "Eros" – Greek gods come down from Mt. Olympus to the Getty to admire the masterpiece, during which time the real story behind the enigmatic painting is revealed. The idea is clever and riddled with potential, but is betrayed by a disappointing script and weak acting/direction.

The second play – "Interrogation" – cranks it up a notch, with more engaging characters and realistic dialogue, along with some signs of life from the cast (particularly lead Gilbert Chayrez Chavarria). The title of the final and most complex of the three – "CODA" – describes both its setting (a meeting of a co-dependency support group) and function, ending the production on a high note. Not only is the dialogue fresh, funny and absorbing, all four actors give exceptionally strong performances. The two females, Cady Zuckerman and Nancy Solomons, deserve particular accolades.

Defending Against Eros plays June 17, 18, 19 at 7 pm and June 20 at 1 pm.

Dancing with Crazies at The Complex Theatres

by Marcus Kaye~

With an abundance of energy, Amy Milano took the stage for her one-woman show, *Dancing with Crazies*. The comedy follows Milano's desire for acceptance and her search for the meaning of "home". Milano unifies, through dance, her life experiences- such as childhood with her grandmother, study abroad classes in Africa, and dating in Brooklyn- looking for a place to call home along the way.

While Milano enjoyably captures the caricatures of those around her, it is the fictional version of herself that she seems to struggle with. Instead of presenting any depth or growth, she offers herself in a flat, one-note fashion.

The play, written by Milano, focuses on the idea of home, but feels purposeless. With no greater message about acceptance, or meaningful explanation as to what or where home actually is, *Dancing with Crazyies* is simply a self-indulgent excuse for Milano to “showcase” herself.

Lighting by Sarah Templeton aided in varying the scenes and the sound by Andrew Wickens helped to unify the piece overall.

Dancing with Crazyies plays June 17 at 9pm and June 19 at 4pm.

A Night of Theater and Music at Woman’s Club of Hollywood

by Melissa Marie Watson

Not to be confused with musical theatre *A Night of Theatre and Music* consists of three one act plays and a band tagged on at the end all centering around the metaphorical “blues”. As individual entities the one acts are not in disharmony with each other and musical act Laura Duncan has an upbeat bluesy voice that would be fantastic in a music venue. However, as a cohesive unit the grouping lacks unity.

We experience a shocking revelation in *Property* set in the property room of a correctional facility, which refreshingly is not about the inmates of the prison but about the families of the convicts. We are then slapped around by a “Tony Soprano” character named Louis played by Armen Torosyan in *A Gravediggers Tale*. Who knew so much could happen after dark in a graveyard that did not involve ghosts, goblins, or dead bodies. To round the sequence off lets hope no one is claustrophobic because we are then stuck in an elevator with a psychiatrist and a so called elevator repair man in *The Thread Men*.

The detail in the minimal set design pulls the plays together and the stand out performance goes to Kay Benjamin.

A Night of Theatre and Music plays June 17, 18, 25 and 26 at 8:00pm

Love & Sex in the Earth’s Spin Cycle at The Second City Studio Theatre

by Ashley Steed~

Lambeth Sterling has gone through years of therapy, meditation, visualization, levitation, affirmations and even lived in an ashram – all so we won’t have to. She recounts stories from her childhood, boyfriends and less than sound advice from her parents. At age 12 she asked her mother about babies and where they come from. Her mother’s reply? “It’s called rape!” I think it’s easy to deduce that Sterling’s love life is going to suffer from this miscommunication.

Thus, Sterling goes on a path of spiritual self-fulfillment, in search of love and happiness. Since then, she’s discovered the power of positive thinking is crap. Trying everything to release her emotional baggage – she realizes that’s she going around the

problem, not to it. She says, “it never occurred to me that I should just cry.” We are complicated, messy f***ed up people – and you know what? That’s OK. If we just get to the core, take ownership of our pain, heartbreak and hurt, then at least we can claim our lives. And in doing so, maybe we can find someone to help us carry our emotional baggage.

As a real life relationship coach, Lambeth approaches the show as if she was giving us a lesson. Overall her performance is strong, there were a few weak moments. The stories jump around and weren’t always clear, making the connections at times tenuous. That being said – the way Lambeth bares her life’s pain in a completely unsympathetic and unsentimental way, with her dead pan, self-mocking delivery and her wonderfully dry wit is terrific.

Love & Sex in the Earth’s Spin Cycle plays at The Second City Studio Theatre on June 17, 24 at 7:00 PM; June 19, 20, 26, 27 at 5:00 PM. i.O. West on June 19, 26 at 8:00 PM. Fringe Central on June 18 at 6:30 PM; June 25 at 6:00 PM.

Can’t You Hear Me Knockin? at the Lounge

by Ashley Steed~

Can’t You Hear Me Knockin? is not just a Rolling Stones song. Kerri Randles’s hilarious one-woman show depicting her life of sex, music and cars certainly entertains. Raised by an emotionally unavailable dad who hid under his toupée and an emotionally too available mother who put parenting aside to feel like a woman, Randles searches for love behind every door. Enthralled by every word of Pamela Des Barres *I’m With the Band*, she clings to a twisted romantic notion of the groupie. Eventually after art school, she road-trips it to LA and becomes an actress-turned-stripper. To call her a stripper with a heart of gold would be too simplistic. Her wit, honesty and candor make her so much more.

Scantly clad in a matching bra and panties (with few other costume elements and shoes to set the scenes) she bares it all. Always cool, calm, collected and sexy she takes her time sharing her story with effortless transitions. Each character is clearly defined to the point where even just one word spoken and we immediately recognize the character. Kudos to director Tony Abatemarco for keeping the storytelling organic and for sharpening Randles’ performance. Randles definitely knows how to capture an audience.

Can’t You Hear Me Knockin? plays at the Lounge Theater on June 17, 24, 25, 26 at 10:30 PM. Early show Sunday, June 20 at 9:00 PM.

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. More info forthcoming - hope to see you there!