

The Behavior of Broadus

The Sacred Fools Theatre

Reviewed by Jose Ruiz



Andrew Joseph Perez - Amir Levi - Hugo Armstrong

Making a musical based on the true tale of a controversial psychologist makes about as much sense as making a musical about Charles Bukowski - but wait! Didn't they do that already? For years this company has been taking themes and personages that are sacred to many and turning their stories around so they look like fools. Why not do it again? This time the Sacred Fools join the Burglars of Hamm and in association with the Center Theatre Group they tell us the chronicle of a man who knew how to walk the heights of fame and had to learn to limp in the shadows of scandal.

In riotous song and dance (complete with live band) we see the compelling tale of John Broadus Watson, a behavioral psychologist, as he evolves in his theoretical experiments about child rearing that left many perplexed, some astounded and a few horrified. In spite of the many foibles that Watson committed in his doggedly disciplinarian ideas, he always managed to come out on top, at least for awhile, and the Fools have created scenarios that make this saga an effervescent pleasure to savor. First, the music is bouncy and at times comical, what with the big tuba booming out

staccato notes. The singing by the entire cast is excellent, with harmonies that accentuate the comedic lyrics. The dance steps are well executed, although this is no ABT, but still credible enough to convince that someone knows how to put a foot on the boards. Eighteen songs drive the story, some duets, some chorales and a solo by Whitney the Chicken. You kinda know what kind of show this is when there's a singing chicken named Whitney, not to mention a rat named Phil who also does a couple of songs.

There are some serious moments, especially with Little Albert (a real experiment by the real Dr. Watson that didn't quite go as planned) but these are offset by some absurdities, like when Watson and assistant Rosalie discover their mutual lust and agree to act on it.

Carolyn Almos, Jon Beauregard and Albert Dayan are listed as the playwrights in the program and one wonders how three people could get together and agree on anything. Yet, this trio manages to play right and comes up with a smooth, well oiled story that keeps the audience laughing throughout.

But we know the secret as to why this worked. It's Ken Roht, choreographer and co-director, who has theatrical vision even beyond the legendary Thespis. We reviewed his work in the [99 Cent Only presentation](#) at the old Evidence Theatre and sang its virtues on this website years ago. He's at it again, creating an aura where reality crosses into fantasy and irrationality teeters dangerously close to seriousness. Co-directing with Roht is Matt Almos.

None of this could happen without the superb work of the actors who have to create these characters and give them credibility and soul. Heading the cast is Hugo Armstrong, who as John Broadus Watson, manages to show the serious, academic and self indulgent side of Watson while bathing the character in a comic aura that makes him at times pitiable. His stern but loyal paramour, Rosalie Raynor is captured completely by Devin Sidell. Although he did a terrific job, Andrew Joseph Perez may have a hard time explaining his resume entry of Phil the Rat at the next audition calling for a leading man type. Other cast members include Erin Holt, Amir Levi, Cj Merriman, Rebecca Metz, Bill Salyers, Tim Sheridan and Jacob Sidney. John Ballinger directs the five piece band.

The production will play through October 18, 2014. Tickets at 310-281-8337 - www.SacredFools.Org

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