

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity



Donald Paul and James Long in San Jose Stage Company's "The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity" running through November 10.

Photo: Dave Lepori

Sunday, October 20, 2013

“The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity” at San Jose Stage Company

Besides the astounding physical action and hilariously unrestrained broad comedy of “The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity” at San Jose Stage Company, the show puts forth some very serious notions about one’s place in society, about truth and illusion, and a definition of art comprehensive enough to include the outrageous spectacle of modern American wrestling. Playwright Kristoffer Diaz has crafted a work where language rules, and it gushes in cataracts of nearly non-stop verbiage delivered in a stellar, tour-de-force performance by Andrew Perez as Macedonio Guerra (AKA “The Mace”).

For the most part, the show delivers its story in a presentational fashion, the players expounding directly to the audience with a lesser amount of character-to-character dialogue. In the world of wrestling, Mace is the fall guy, “the guy who loses to make the winner look good.” After all, as everyone knows, this kind of wrestling ain’t Greco-Roman; it’s show biz, and show biz is scripted. The brutal mayhem audiences love to cheer and boo is carefully rehearsed to create the illusion of violence so that physical damage is limited and the performers can live to fight another day. This not to say there are no injuries, aches and pains, and sometimes blood, but that it is all to a great extent illusion. The action of the play demonstrates classic-wrestling moves like the “jackknife powerbomb” in which an opponent’s head is scissored between the legs of the perpetrator, lifted high by the waist then slammed down back first to the mat. The effect looks terrible, but the victim has techniques that minimizes the fall, which is enhanced by over-the-top playacting.

Although Chad Deity is the title role, the show belongs to Mace who has a story to tell starting from his childhood in the Bronx where he fell in love with professional wrestling. He longs to be the champion, but is restricted to being the foil of Chad. It is a necessary role, but unsatisfying and poorly paid. Chad himself (a stupendous Donald Paul) is not a good wrestler, but is rather a preening jackanapes dressed in gaudy gold who flashes a thousand watt grin at the audience while always riotously referring to himself in the third person. He is a hollow, moneymaking image.

As the fast talking Indian-American Vigneshwar Paduar (AKA “VP”), a streetwise Svengali who gets lured into the world of wrestling by Mace, Jaspal Binning is a superb chameleon changing and adapting to accommodate to whatever situation and company in which he finds himself.

The irresistible Randall King as the sleazy, sharkskin-suited Everett K. Olson (AKA “EKO”) is a low-rent Barnum, a wrestling impresario who homes in on VP’s otherness and turns him into a ridiculous mélange of Middle-eastern, South Asian and Muslim stereotypes dubbing him “The Fundamentalist,” a villain for xenophobic boo birds to hate.

Playing wrestlers doomed to lose, James Long is an enthusiastic comedic wonder as “Bad Guy,” “Heartland” and “Old Glory.” And he is a real wrestler with WWE, TNA and ROH experience who literally throws himself with affected heedlessness and consummate skill into the action. You just have to love him.

The show is magnificently produced. The set, designed by Ian Wallace, boasts a wrestling ring with a sprung mat that smacks of authenticity and the projected graphics (also by Mr. Wallace), which include some live action camera work as well, are inspired. The sound design by Gregg Coffin with all the driving beats and raucousness one associates with the world of professional wrestling is nothing short of marvelous.

The fast paced direction of Jonathan Williams has made “The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity” a boisterous, rowdy good time that slips in some seriousness like a stiletto between the ribs. San Jose Stage Company does it again.

“Chad Deity” runs through November 10 at The Stage, First and William in Downtown San Jose.

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)