



The Rewards of Time

From director Matt Almos and co-director Ken Roht, whose signature joyful style is intact but somehow clearer; to the always grounded Hugo Armstrong who plays Broadus and strings together 20 years of work in a single night; to the uniformly stunning cast: this is LA's intimate theater at its complicated best.

LISTEN TO THIS EPISODE

SEP 30, 2014

PLAY

FROM THIS EPISODE

This is Anthony Byrnes Opening the Curtain on LA Theater for KCRW.

Remember back to Psychology 101. . . or even better the beginning of the last century. Psychology is a brand new discipline trying to gain a foothold as one of the Sciences. Freud and Jung are the big guys talking about cigars and dreams and the mysterious netherworld of the unconscious. On the other side of the debate for what drives a mind are the upstart Behaviorists. Eschewing, what they consider the hokum of psychoanalysis, they believe in conditioning; reward and punishment: the rat will find the cheese if you shock him enough times!

Now imagine a darkly funny, oddly joyful musical based on the misguided journey of one of these pioneers of the mind.

That's a peek into the witty, complicated inspiration of the LA company Burglars of Hamm and their world premiere musical *The Behaviour of Broadus* now playing at Sacred Fools.

The Broadus of the title is John Broadus Watson. While he seems like an absurd creation of the Burglars of Hamm, Mr. Watson is a historical figure and a surprising amount of the musical is actually true.

But don't expect a staid respectful biography. The Burglars hold true to the chronicled arc but pervert the telling through their own blend of witty, sardonic humor. This is a world where lab rats are personified, singing solos and a chicken can be a man's best friend.

Now if you don't know the Burglars of Hamm, they're a four-person writing/performing collective that surface every few years with a satirical gem. One of their early pieces from more than a decade ago, "Resa Fantastiskt Mystisk" purported to be a lost masterwork of a Strindberg contemporary. As the audience entered they were given headphones with a director's voice telling them what it all meant. These are folks so steeped in the theater that they know how to poke fun at its foibles.

As exciting as their earlier work was, this piece is a transcendent breakthrough.

While the musical begins with the irreverent tone the company's known for, as it unfolds across two hours the journey becomes more sophisticated and nuanced.

It's also something of a Cinderella story for the company and LA theater. While the

Burglars have been toying with the idea for more than a decade, in 2010 Center Theater Group commissioned the project and lent development support. It's that remarkably rare example of LA's theater ecosystem working the way it should with the big guy supporting a small local company to production. Now CTG passed on producing it at the Kirk Douglas and it's easy to see why the comedy would make them a little skittish. No sacred cow, or pig, is safe in the Burglars hands. But if the cheeky Book of Mormon could fill the Pantages, The Behavior of Broadus deserves a chance to fill the Douglas.

For longtime LA theater fans it's also a chance to see the payoff and maturity of dedicated, consistent work. From director Matt Almos and co-director Ken Roht, whose signature joyful style, honed through so many 99 cent spectaculars, is intact but somehow clearer; to the always grounded Hugo Armstrong who plays Broadus and strings together 20 years of work in a single night; to the uniformly stunning cast: this is LA's intimate theater at its complicated best.

Don't miss this one.

The Behavior of Broadus plays at Sacred Fools in Hollywood through October 18th.

This is Anthony Byrnes Opening the Curtain on LA Theater for KCRW.

Banner Image Credit: [Geoffrey Wade Photography](#)