

Review Wicked fun with 'The Behavior of Broadus' at Sacred Fools Theater

By **DAVID C. NICHOLS**

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Controversial psychology and show-biz moxie commingle in “The Behavior of Broadus,” with triumphant results.

As delightfully self-assured as it is comically self-referential, made up of equal parts whimsy, wacky, profane and profound, this cracked experiment in satirical musical development is a wickedly entertaining watershed for Sacred Fools Theater Company, the Burglars of Hamm, Center Theatre Group and the general theatrical landscape.

John Broadus Watson, the father of behaviorism and subliminal Madison Avenue tactics, may seem a peculiar subject for a “tuner”; no doubt so did Mormon missionaries in Uganda or Andrew Jackson as a rock star when first proposed as ideas.

Written by the Burglars – Carolyn Almos, Matt Almos, Jon Beauregard and Albert Dayan – with composer Brendan Milburn, the “sort-of-true story” unfolds to the beat of musical director John Ballinger’s deft combo like a bluegrass Dada cabaret in a shimmering petri dish.

Expertly co-directed by Almos and Ken Roht, whose choreography as usual rocks, the production is remarkably resourceful, from Jason H. Thompson’s marvelous projections and Ann Closs-Farley’s bipolar costumes to Tifanie McQueen’s spare set pieces and Brandon Baruch’s surreal lighting.

Hugo Armstrong is amazing yet again as the hero. The property could stand further tweaks -- particularly its over-reliance on vignettes and some songs that feel underdeveloped next to showstoppers such as “Albert, Albert, Albert,” “I Know the Stars” and “Ad Man” -- but it’s difficult to care when faced with such rapt, silly-smart invention, played to the hilt and beyond by a fantastic ensemble.

Devin Sidell is wonderful as lab assistant/second wife Rosalie Raynor, adroitly balancing parody and pathos. Andrew Joseph Perez’s absurdly loquacious trained rodent and Amir Levi’s notorious infant test case are riotous. They, like colleagues Erin Holt, Cj Merriman, Rebecca Metz, Bill Salyers, Tim Sheridan and Jacob Sidney, embody multiple roles with unswerving panache.

The improbably cohesive net effect feels suspiciously like a groundbreaking new musical. You have

just been psychologically programmed to reserve tickets immediately.

“The Behavior of Broadus,” Sacred Fools Theater, 660 N. Heliotrope, Hollywood. 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays. Ends Oct. 18. \$25. (310) 281-8337 or www.sacredfools.org.
Running time: 2 hours, 20 minutes.

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