

Review of *Mickee Visits Mickey: The Mickee Faust Club in Performance*, National Communication Association Convention, Orlando, Florida, November 17, 2012.

The vaudevillian performance of *Mickee Visits Mickey: The Mickee Faust Club in Performance* by the *Mickee Faust Company* that I had the pleasure of viewing at the National Communication Association Convention in Orlando, Florida last November had much to recommend it and I am happy to write this letter of review detailing some of those delights. Having seen selected performances by this company previously I was happy to see a kind of retrospective sampling of their work from past productions. As such, I was aware that I was not watching a singular coherent production but rather a true vaudeville performance of various acts across performance genres and styles.

The things that struck me most about watching this show was the fact that given that this production may not have been entirely representative of the troupe's entire repertoire, I was still able to detect some overarching themes that the company plays with, subverts, and comments on in their work.

The production highlighted a number of performance genres that the company delights in playing out the tropes for and while doing so subverts those same tropes as a way to get at either political content, the dark shadow side of things, or social conventions. Some of the genres on display in the show were the musical theatre, Disney music, reality television, various forms of the novel, and the detective radio drama. In each of these genre presentations the company follows the usual conventions set out for that particular genre in order for the audience to recognize it before in some way subverting it.

We get a sense of some of the ways they set out to subvert genre at the beginning of the production when the cast does their version of the Disney song "It's a Small World," changing it to "It's a Faust World" which exposes the underbelly and shadow side of the always sunny and harmonious Disney narrative. This is followed up with a monologue by Mickee (Terry Galloway), the rat bastard brother of Mickey Mouse. Here he rants about the good life Mickey has in comparison to the one he has effectively serving as Mickey's shadow. These two pieces taken together form the introduction of the show and let us know that the cast, led by Mickee, is out to upend our expectations.

As the show progresses, we see this upending of expectations played out in the aforementioned subversion of genre. In the piece "Lady Liberty" we get a critique of reality television that points out how vacuous it is as a genre. We have a playing with several novels spoofed and parodied for political effect. *Moby Dick's* Captain is now captaining an eco-tourist boat having given up the search for the Great White Whale and *Alice in Wonderland* becomes an occasion for crazy right-wing rantings at a Tea Party with Alice being the liberal scapegoat. There is a presentation called "The Hot Seat" that

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reimagines the detective radio drama playing out all the usual suspects that is full of sharp writing and spot on performances that make us recognize and laugh at and along with the performers at the melodramatic-ness of this type of drama.

Along with the taking on of performance genres, the company is concerned with political and social commentary. The Alice in Wonderland spoof is one such example where contemporary political arguments are examined and held up for ridicule. There is a take on the Supreme Court called "The Constitution" in which the "Supremes" morph into members of the Ku Klux Klan and then the entire thing becomes a strip tease. There is even a restaurant scene in which each of those present is tempted by the dessert tray. Everyone, of course, wants to give in to the temptation but no one will say so until one brave soul lets in to desire only to see that desire stamped out just as quickly.

There is throughout the show some play with gender in which biological male actors play women and biological female actors play men. This is most pointed in the radio show when a woman plays the Dick, the Private Eye. There is great fun in this play by the company. And it should be said at this point that it is a cohesive company at that. They "play well" together. In the talk back after the show the company described their collaborative process of working together and I think that shows on the stage. The actors rely on one another and slide in and out of scenes beautifully.

One thing that kept the show moving in terms of its pace was the use of a band on stage. The band kept things moving between scenes and accompanied the actors during their musical moments. The band was as playful as the actors and in fact were actors in their own right in the production.

With all shows of this nature, not every skit or piece works as well as all the others and this is true here too. In particular, I was disappointed in one of the "Bad Jokes." It was a retelling of an old Sophie Tucker/Better Midler joke. This joke fell flat because it didn't have the timing that Tucker or Midler have in delivering the joke and by turning it in to a scene with two actors it flattened out the conventions of the joke telling format. However, this is a small quibble and I am perhaps colored by my own love for that particular joke and my own witnessing of Ms. Midler telling it.

This show is the obviously the work of talented and dedicated artists. I don't have from the program full names of all those involved but I do know that Donna Nudd and Terry Galloway head up the company and they should be commended for the tremendous work that the company does. All the performers, musicians, writers, directors, choreographers, and producers have done their jobs exceedingly well and I commend them for a fun filled, thought provoking production.

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