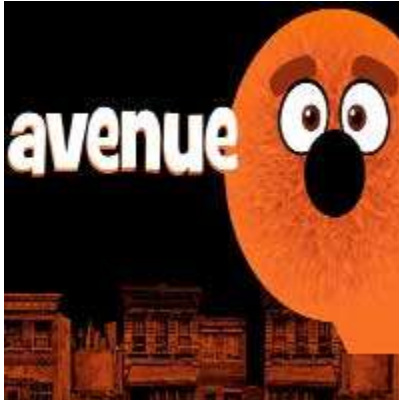


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“Avenue Q”

Alan Bresloff



Highly Recommended ***** I know in the past, when it came to shows at The Metropolis Performing Arts Centre in Arlington Heights, I have been unkind, but the current production of “Avenue Q” took my breath away! It was by far the best thing ever on their stage, and is a show that would be worthy of Jeff Citations. Over the years, I have tried to cover their shows, but found that the selection of shows and their quality were not strong. Now, in 2018, their production of the hilarious musical “Avenue Q” (Sesame Street- x rated) is smashing and equal to the quality of any of Chicago’s finest musical theater companies. Bravo to Joe Keefe and your staff for finding the cast and production people to bring this wonderful theatrical experience to your stage-

For those of you who do not know anything about the show, “Avenue Q”, has a book by Jeff Whitty, music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and is based on the original book written by messrs Lopez and Marx. The story is about a recent college graduate, Princeton (Alex Newkirk is amazing), with a Bachelor of Arts in English, who moves out , on his own, to New York , to begin his career. In this case, we see that this recent college grad is also a “puppet” which does make it very difficult indeed. I must point out that there is a great mix of puppets and people, and despite the actors working the puppets, while we see them singing and speaking, under the solid direction of Lauren Rawitz (her best work to date) and Daniel Dempsey’s puppet choreography, we lose sight that there are puppets and puppeteer. The performers blend with their

characters (and puppets) becoming one, so we the audience lose sight of which is



which. This is sheer perfection!

Princeton moves to a lower rent district, which is in fact, “Avenue Q”, where he meets a collection of characters that seems unreal, but in the long run, we find that there is a morale to the show relative to being able to tolerate people (or monsters) that are different. The love of Princeton’s life is Kate Monster (handled by the adorable Emilie Rose Danno), who wants to find her mate, but of greater import, to establish a school for monsters so they can be treated as equals. The super at the apartment complex is “Gary Coleman” (supposedly the TV personality, later in life (Aziza Macklin is a delight)), and other residents are Rod (Josh Kemper) and Nicky (deftly handled by Aaron Lockman) who are sort of the “Ernie and Bert” of this show. A special hurrah to Joe Farrell, here who helps to work the puppet, Nicky. He also does a great job along with Emma Rathe, as the bad idea bears- they



were terrific!

In addition to these characters, there is the couple down the way, Christmas Eve (played to perfection by Emily Baily) and her fiancé (later husband) Brian (Jordan DeBose) and the amazingly powerful William Marquez, who steals the show as Trekkie Monster (when he does “The Internet is For Porn”, the entire theater was rocking). In fact, one of the nicer features of this production is the intimacy of the theater allowing

the actors to play off audience members, Trekkie did it and the very sensual (if one can call a puppet sensual) Lucy, (Michelle Tibble plays to this to the hilt, getting every laugh possible. She also does a great stint as Mrs. T, Kate Monster's boss) when she does her "Special, "You Can Be As Loud As You Want" number.



Speaking of numbers, "When You're Making Love" is a powerful Bedroom scene/song/dance?, that will explain the R Rating (maybe it should be x!). Other songs, "Everyone's A Little Bit Racist", "It Sucks To Be Me", "If You Were Gay" and of course "Purpose" will stick in your mind, hours after you leave the theater. The story is about people (and puppets) and how they can co-exist in a world that has strong divisions. It ends up with that "happily ever after" that makes musical theater such a great experience, and I only wish it would have a longer run, so more of you can see it.

The tech crew, starting with the set design (Robert Pinta) a close copy of the original, the lighting (Matthew Winstead), sound (Michael Patrick), costumes (Catherine Tantillo) and props (Linda Scheufler), along with the video designers (Zach Rosing and Ben Phillippe) and the musicians, led by Kailey Rockwell (also on keyboards), Andrew Milliken (2nd keyboard), Perry Cowdery (guitar and banjo), Michael Bulaw (bass), Matthew Beck (horns) and Anthony Scardora (drums/percussion). These six made music of a much larger band. Great work!

"Avenue Q" will continue at The Metropolis Performing Arts Centre located at 111 W. Campbell Street in Arlington Heights thru June 30th (maybe they will extend it) with performances as follows:



Thursdays 730 p.m.

Fridays 7:30 p.m.

Saturdays 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Sundays 3 p.m.

Tickets are \$40 (there are no bad seats in this cozy theater) and can be purchased at the box office, by calling 847-577-2121 or online at www.MetropolisArts.com

Plenty of free parking in the garage building behind the theater first floor, fourth and fifth ONLY

running time with a 15 minute intermission, two-hours-20 minutes

To see what others are saying, visit www.theatreinchicago.com, go to Review Round-Up and click at "Avenue Q"- this is a production worth the trip from the city !

<http://www.aroundthetownchicago.com/theatre-reviews/avenue-q-3/>