

# Metropolis' 'Avenue Q' provides an R-rated and hilarious adults-only revisit to the 'Street'

May 28, 2018



By Erika Brown Thomas

*Avenue Q*, presented by the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, is a great way to spend the night with your favorite adult theatre companion.

The show is hilariously ribald, high-energy and most definitely R-rated. *Avenue Q* exists in a parallel universe to *Sesame Street*, where muppets (human, monster and other) and humans live out life's ups and downs together.

**Alex Newkirk** puppets Princeton, a recent college grad, new to Avenue Q, who is discovering the difficulties of "adulting." Newkirk's character voicing and masterful puppetry set a high bar for the rest of the cast. Nuances made in Princeton's "breathing" and "walking" bring the puppet to life, adding significant depth to a puppet incapable of facial expression.



Kate Monster (**Emilie Rose Danno**), in a world where puppets are part of societal norms and strife, brings to life the disrespect and flagrant prejudice her character experiences for simply being a “monster.” Danno easily brings an honesty and likeability to the young monster’s story, especially when also exploring the ups and downs of her romantic relationship with Princeton. A particular standout moment for Danno is her Act I finale ballad, “There’s A Fine, Fine Line.”

**Michelle Tribble** slays the vocals as the vampish puppet Lucy (as well as another puppet, Mrs. T). Tribble is a knockout in every way, especially in her exaggerated breathiness and buxom portrayal of Lucy’s flirtatiousness. Her comedic timing is spot on and leaves one wishing she had more stage time.

Nicky and Rod (**Aaron Lockman** and **Josh Kemper** respectively) play two roommates who exploit the rumors about *Sesame Street’s* version of *The Odd Couple*. The classic type A vs. type B personality conflict runs rampant with both Lockman and Kemper nailing their portrayals. Their winsome performances beckon the audience to smile as their story unfolds. Lockman’s voice, in particular, successfully harkens the voice of **Jim Henson’s** Ernie—a feat that many have attempted and failed.



**Gary Coleman** (yep, *that* Gary Coleman), played by **Aziza Macklin**, is one of the many quirky jokes of *Avenue Q*. Macklin's imitations are hysterical and she sincerely supports the hapless residents as they work out their daily drudgeries...even if it "sucks to be her."

**William Marquez** plays the resident and heralded "pervert puppet" of the building, Trekkie Monster, going after audience shock value with gusto. He successfully maintains his gravelly character voice throughout the show, which is an impressive feat in both conversation and song. Marquez's comedic timing of Trekkie's degenerate moments serves as the source of many laughs as well as many amusingly awkward moments.

**Emily Bailey** (Christmas Eve) and **Jordan DeBose** (Brian) are the Avenue's human and by far most successful couple. They provide the "sweet" subplot that all the old school episodes of *Sesame Street* utilize. Bailey glosses over the highly intentional and racist portrayal of Asian women and makes everyone "feel better" about it as she joins DeBose, Macklin, Danno and Newkirk in the catchy and woke little song, "Everyone's A Little Bit Racist."





**Avenue Q** packs an impolite political punch as the characters navigate their way through “social taboos,” and is both funny and uncomfortable as it shines a spotlight on societal problems and the hypocrisy that exists within them. Even while exploring such deep topics, the cast effectively keeps the audience laughing and smiling throughout.

*Metropolis Performing Arts Centre presents “Avenue Q” through June 30 at , 111 W Campbell St, Arlington Heights. More information and tickets are available [here](#).*

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