

The Brain from Planet X

Crosswalk Players—PTE Mainstage

I was working hard on not liking this play, and it was coming along well, right up to the big tap dance number. That's where they got me.

Okay, so what we have here is an unofficial sequel to Plan 9 From Outer Space. But someone already made Plan 10, so they had to title this something else. It's basically a musical send up of all those 1950's sci-fi movies that we know and love. Now and then, you can even spot a line of dialogue borrowed from one movie or another.

Unfortunately, there was no program, so it's impossible to tell who was who. It's a huge cast, the Evil Brain vamps it up, shades of Paul Lynde by way of Roger the Alien from American Dad. Accompanying him is a space babe apparently going into heat, and an alien henchman who gets distracted. On the other side is a hormonally driven teen, her beatnik boyfriend, an old scientist, a general and his soldierette, and a classic 50's husband and wife team.

After that, it's alien invasions, mind control rays, and scheming aliens versus two-fisted Americana.

Look, we've seen it all before. Hell, we've all seen the 50's movies, and we've seen legions of spoofs both good and bad; you're not going to find anything radical here. It's not *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Still, the 90-minute production moves along with a brisk succession of musical numbers

Some of the gags fall flat, the story feels like they misplaced a reel towards the end, the sound effects are a bit too overpowering, the set is barely there, and costumes are sometimes weak. But the cast gives it their all, and their commitment carries them over the weak spots. In the end, you can't help liking it, and forgiving the little flaws.

It's an amiable, unthreatening, unchallenging good time, and you walk out with a smile on your face. That's not a bad thing, so check it out.

Den Valdron

The Corpse Who Wouldn't Shut Up

Magic of One Productions—RRC

In the days before television, TIVO, and Netflix, people entertained themselves when the day's work was done. The two main forms were storytelling and music. Magic of One (storytellers Kay Stone, Mary Louise Chown and Tom Roche, plus musicians Michael Corbus and Kevin Scott), recreate that atmosphere in this compelling production.

Stories interspersed with music (or is it the other way around?) keep us entertained. The central story about a seemingly impossible task made more difficult by a trickster, is the framework around which the three talented storytellers tell other tales from around the world. Musical interludes from equally diverse sources illuminate the stories and seamlessly blend the episodes.

This is a long way from stand-up or sketch comedy, but you might be surprised to learn that the performance drew laughter from the audience several times. The show features several surprise twists, and the frequent changes prevent the show from dragging. Indeed, several times I was disappointed when a story or musical interlude ended. A bonus for hardcore fringers is that the show clocked in at least five minutes faster than the advertized 75 minutes.

Special praise goes out to technician Ntarra Curry for a nice touch on the lighting board, especially at the end.

Kevin Longfield

SMUT SLAM

Cameryn Moore/Heather Witherden—Mondragon

This inaugural pre-Fringe event, held the Tuesday night before Fringe opening, gave both Fringe performers and community members the opportunity to get before a mic and recount their most outrageous sexual exploits. There were also poignant reminiscences, one x-rated retelling of a fairy tale, and a serious recollection (which actually won top prize).

There were five judges (mostly Fringe performers) and prizes—donated by Love Nest—went to the top three storytellers. Although this event was independent of the Winnipeg Fringe, it was billed as "a perfect, perverse kick-off to your Winnipeg Fringe!" And indeed it was!

The Mondragon was packed and most in the enthusiastic audience were just plain folk of quite an age range.

This was a labour of love by Fringe performers to attract more attention to the Winnipeg Fringe. Cameryn Moore of Massachusetts (whose solo Fringe show this year is slut (r)evolution), co-hosted SLUT SLAM with Winnipeg's Heather Witherden of Tazzy's Angels. It is hoped that this event will become an annual affair. Based on the response to the first one, it has a great chance to become a permanent fixture.

Robin Chase

N.O.N.C.E

Steve Larkin—MTC Up the Alley

I am very tired of hearing people complain about one-man shows. While there are many huge musical casts this year, boasting many large sets and hundreds of props and costumes, Steve presented one of my now favorite Fringe shows with just himself and a chair.

This true story comes from his work as poet-in-residence at a men's therapeutic correctional institute. This amazing spoken word artist tells the stories of the men he worked with, but also of his own relationships with others. He was very personal but not to the point of discomforting the audience. He was graphic, but only necessarily so, and at all times keeps a beautiful connection with the audience.

The stories were fascinating and the views or opinions were expressed in such a way that you can either agree with them, or take the ample room he leaves for you in which to disagree.

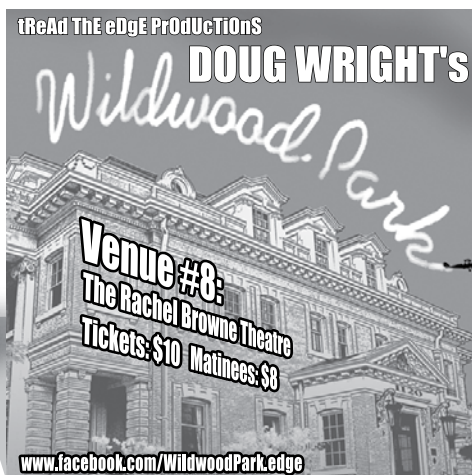
This is a fantastic show to discuss over beers afterward. I attended his opening at 2:15 on Thursday and while the audience was mostly much older, with much whiter hair, they all seemed to enjoy it very, very much.

I cannot recommend this show highly enough. And even if the subject matter seems upsetting to you, please challenge yourself to see it. It will make you laugh and make you think. Shock value is not abused and is left to the title. And, I will admit, I did recognize the names used for the students. Please see his show to learn what that means and discuss as you see fit.

Theresa Thomson



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