

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity

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unfolds, however, each of the three BIPOC wrestlers struggles uniquely with the limited roles they are offered.

Profile Theater's production, directed by its Artistic Director Josh Hecht, works on every level. The play is really funny, and a strong cast and tight direction deliver every laugh. La'Tevin Alexander plays Chad broadly; he preens and panders and wrests control of every moment of audience interaction, not visibly troubled by the dynamics at play. Naren Wiess is hilarious and unnerving as VP; he oozes charisma but has little patience for exploitation. Matthew Sepeda imbues Mace with intention and cajoles us into rooting for his doomed hopes; he is the emotional heart of the play. Watching these three size each other up and spar and play while being played is funny and complex and discomfiting; Duffy Epstein as Olsen leaves no doubt about who holds all the cards, and Levi Cooper employs his own history as a pro wrestler to lend the show's wrestling sequences authenticity, if one can use this context.

Pro wrestling is naturally suited for comedy, but play-

wright Kristoffer Dias also mines the form for insights about the endless ways in which capitalism employs racism and stereotypes to advantage a few at the expense of the many. Mace convinces himself he is happy losing, given how much he loves the sport--but over time that becomes less and less convincing. He sees in VP an opportunity to create a narrative that will imbue them both with more agency--but the ways their efforts are subverted, including by themselves, is very telling. And though Chad may

appear to enjoy the most agency of the three, the play opens that to question, too.

The result is entertaining, and also disquieting in all the best ways. This is a show to prioritize; see it before it closes on October 23.

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie and theater review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. Find her review blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.

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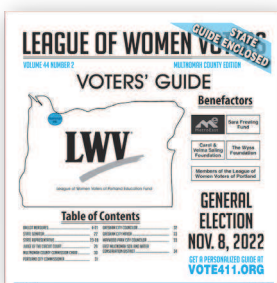


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