

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity

OPINIONATED JUDGE

BY DARLEEN ORTEGA



There is no better reason to visit a theater in Portland right now than Profile Theater's fantastic production of a fantastic play, "The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity." The show is entertaining, smart, and will take you as deep as you are willing to go.

Kristoffer Diaz's play, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2010, is set in the world of professional wrestling where, as our guide Macedonio (Mace) Guerra explains, the job of the really skilled wrestlers is to make the mediocre ones look amazing. (That noticing reverberates for some of us beyond the world of professional wrestling--and it's meant to.) In the fictional world of THE Wrestling, that means Mace's regular gig is to lose spectacularly to the anointed champion, Chad Deity--and though both of them know the game is rigged, Chad treats the consequences (which include acclaim and cash for Chad but not for Mace) as legitimate.



The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity is playing at the Profile Theatre

And, in a way, so does Mace--he understands his role and doesn't resent it, much.

Both Mace, who is Puerto Rican, and Chad, who is Black, are essentially employed as characters curated by Everett K.

Olsen (or EKO), the CEO of THE Wrestling who capitalizes on racial stereotypes to whip up audience enthusiasm. Mace narrates aptly what is happening, and defends it enough that one can wonder who

he is trying to convince. The only real justification is that this sells--and is that a justification?

In the course of the play, Mace finds hope and possibly a powerful kindred soul in Vigneshwa Paduar (VP), a Brooklyn man of Indian descent who energetically inhabits a variety of charismatic and comic personas. Mace decides to pitch VP to EKO as his next big wrestling star but EKO doesn't see it as Mace is pitching it. Instead, EKO tumbles on the idea of casting VP as... the Fundamentalist, a terrorist challenger to Chad and to all that Americans hold dear. Mace, cast as a similarly menacing Mexican, will accompany the Fundamentalist to the ring as his manager.

The play's action is funny and swift and physical. It also is astute. Wrestling is depicted realistically, and as a particularly clear embodiment of how capitalism and American dream mythology trades and depends on racist stereotypes, mirroring our values back to us. Mace, in his hopeful way, seeks to enlist VP as a means of asserting more agency; he seeks a less confining place from which to operate. As the play

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AS THE YEAR WINDS DOWN...

The weather cools. The kids return to school. Some of us even start planning for the upcoming holiday season. Overall, the pace of life can seem slow in autumn, and that might mean more time staying indoors and turning more to devices for entertainment. For some people, that could mean that gambling online becomes more of a pastime. But there's good news; you don't have to let gambling dominate your life.

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