



Ellie Hino in the Brave New Workshop's Sarah Palin's Minnesota  
Photo: Brave New Workshop

## Review: Sarah Palin's Minnesota heralds a perpetual state of absurdity

By [Brad Richason](#), Twin Cities Performance Art Examiner  
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Retrospective comedy revues of previously performed material can be challenging. Removed from the original context, sketches often lose much of their impact as topical references grow vague. Today's John Edwards is yesterday's Wayne Hays. Remember Wayne Hays?\* No? That's the point. So a degree of skepticism about the Brave New Workshop's latest production, a collection of satiric hits from recent seasons, would certainly be understandable. Thankfully such concerns prove thoroughly unwarranted. ***Sarah Palin's Minnesota; or Hindsight is 2011*** avoids any staleness by focusing on topics that – unlike the titular narrator – show no signs of aging.

Emphasizing the polarizing tendencies of the half-term former governor of Alaska, cast member Ellie Hino imbues her Salin Palin impersonation with inflammatory rhetoric, questionable logic, inarticulate phrasing, and dubious sincerity. Hino seems to relish the narrative role, transitioning through sketches like a bewildered tour guide, oblivious to the abundant absurdities of our home state.

To provide too many sketch details would be to spoil part of the production's appeal. Returning audiences, however, will be gratified by encore performances of some of the most uproarious scenes of the last ten years. First-timers, on the other hand, need not worry about being left out on the joke. On the contrary, one is to be envied for being introduced to the sexual innuendoes of butterflies, the dangers of diversity training, the dire applications of a turkey baster, and anatomical lessons graphically represented with a Tokyo subway map.

In characteristic fashion, director Peter Guertin keeps the sketches moving at a breathless clip. Loose narrative gestures have been made to connect the sketches and assist the production's flow, but the effort isn't stressed. With stalwart musical director Peter Guertin providing the soundtrack, none of the scenes lack for liveliness or pacing. The outstanding Brave New Workshop cast does the rest.

Along with Ellie Hino, the production features Lauren Anderson, Josh Eakright, Mike Fotis, and Bobby Gardner. While the absence of another regular cast member, Joe Bozic, can't help but disappoint, the others rise to the

occasion. Josh Eakright, in particular, continues to demonstrate his versatility, transitioning from an earnest folk singer's ridiculously expectant ode to Barack Obama into a disturbingly hedonistic seal. Bobby Gardner continues to seek humor in tarnished innocence, especially in a hilarious portrayal of an embittered Tim Pawlenty. And though the production puts Lauren Anderson and Mike Fotis in generally less eccentric roles, both performers run with the opportunity to display their tremendous comic range.

Occasionally the production does feel like it's treading old ground, but such moments are largely compensated by the overall quality of the work and the energetic commitment of the performances. Once ***Sarah Palin's Minnesota*** has wrapped, of course, there's an unlimited supply of events just waiting to be mocked – especially as we near the next Presidential campaign season. With the Brave New Workshop providing the satiric commentary, Minnesotans are well prepared to savor the madness to come.

\* Wayne Hays was an Ohio politician who served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 14 years (1949-1976) until a particularly lurid sex scandal derailed his career.

***Sarah Palin's Minnesota; or Hindsight is 2011*** runs through June 25th.

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