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Review: Brave New Workshop's latest revue reviews greatest hits in sex and politics

By Rob Hubbard
Special to the Pioneer Press

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As a congressman's recent indiscretion-driven resignation reminds us, sex and politics have long been bedfellows. They're also the twin engines that propel Brave New Workshop's latest comedy revue, "Sarah Palin's Minnesota or Hindsight is 2011." In compiling a greatest hits of skits from its past few years, the troupe decided that most of its best material had something to do with politics or a lot to do with sex acts and organs.

So if you're easily offended by the latter, you might not like this show. But I found it to be a welcome return to the irreverent spirit that once pervaded the company's work. It may not have much to do with either Sarah Palin or Minnesota, but it keeps the laughs coming pretty consistently.

The entredres start out double — a poem that makes every Twin Cities suburb's name sound obscene and a pop tune full of racy lepidopteran metaphors — but become more direct as the evening goes on. The climax, as it were, comes when Ellie Hino morphs from a 30-something woman out on a date into an ovulating Godzilla desperate to have a child. But audiences might find it equally hard to shake the image of a leotard-clad Josh Eakright as an overly aroused seal at an oil spill cleanup.

The political material isn't nearly as clever, but has fine moments like an absurdly worshipful paean to Barack Obama from the 2008 campaign. The most admirable revivals actually come from comic tools used early in the company's 52-year history: A mock news

segment with ripped-from-the-headlines material (in Saturday's case, a besotted and bitter Tim Pawlenty bemoaning his lack of traction in the 2012 presidential race) and tossing audience members into the middle of skits.

Part of what makes the show a success is that its five actors never oversell the jokes and rarely turn their characters into caricatures. Perhaps because they know these sketches to have gone over well in previous productions, there's a relaxed confidence in the cast. Sex jokes may sound like a lowest-common-denominator undertaking, but there's plenty of wit in these. And the Brave New Workshop has sometimes played it too safe in recent years, so it's refreshing to find them unafraid to offend.

Rob Hubbard can be reached at rhubbard@pioneerpress.com.

What: "Sarah Palin's Minnesota or Hindsight is 2011"

When: 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 7 and 10 p.m. Saturdays; through April 23

Where: Brave New Workshop Comedy Theatre, 2605 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis

Tickets: \$29-\$26, available at 612-332-6620 or bravenewworkshop.com

Capsule: Sex trumps politics in an enjoyable greatest hits of recent skits.

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