

## This 'Sarah Palin' takes aim with wit, not malice



Joe Lampi

Ellie Hino in "Sarah Palin's Minnesota" at Brave New Workshop.

Brave New Workshop tours Minnesota and skewers politicians of all stripes.

By **ROHAN PRESTON**, Star Tribune

Last update: February 14, 2011 - 4:41 PM

It is clear from "Sarah Palin's Minnesota," the comedy revue that opened over the weekend in Minneapolis, that the Brave New Workshop is an equal-opportunity offender. The humor in the show is tart and pungent. But the character of Sarah Palin --



"half-term governor of Alaska" -- does not come off as being anchored in malice or animus. (And President Obama comes in for a some comic inflation, then deflation, as well.)

As played with folksy earnestness by Ellie Hino, this Sarah Palin is a little stouter than her real-world inspiration. Vocally, her Minnesota connections are even more pronounced, with a broad Ole and Lena accent. Hino plays the part well in the few bits that feature Palin.

But the title is just an excuse for the Workshop to present some of its best skits in recent years, including a hard-selling church ("Sunday Sunday Sunday"). I was especially tickled by the onscreen illustrations of male and female physiological differences in another skit. The male piece had two arrows going in opposite directions. The female representation was a map of the Tokyo subway system.

"Sarah Palin" features the current ensemble of Workshop talent, including Bobby Gardner, Mike Fotis and Lauren Anderson. They continue to do what performers have done since Dudley Riggs founded the Workshop in 1958 -- sharply skewer overweening personalities and popular trends.

The show offers skits, er, trips, to select precincts of the state, some with a famous tour guide whose own reality show was prematurely cancelled. There is a vignette in which environmentalists try to wash a seal that's been soiled with oil. Fearless performer Josh Eakright, clad in a black body suit (I hope he's

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paid a lot to wear such a ridiculous thing), plays the seal, which is horny. The environmentalists who come to scrub oil from his belly get to see and hear way more than they expected.

One vignette centers on diversity training at an all-white workplace. A character, played by Gardner, is named Darius Washington. His co-workers start to treat him as if he's black. It's more humorous than disturbing.

Directly and indirectly, gender comes in for some skewering as well, including in a vignette about a woman with a loud biological clock and lots of dropping eggs.

"Sarah Palin" has audience-interactive sections. On Saturday, an administrative assistant at 3M seemed shell-shocked when she first was pulled onstage. But this comedy virgin soon loosened up for oodles of laughs.

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