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Workshop eyes politics, oil spill

Late summer is the silly season in politics. When the weather's fine and the beach still beckons, nobody much cares what's going on in the State House or the White House. In response to the general disinterest, politicians' sound bites get louder and loonier. Throw in an upcoming midterm election and the silliness can go off the charts.

It's a situation that would seem tailor-made for the folks at Brave New Workshop, but, as "Spilling Me Softly; or Once the Gulf Goes Black, It Never Goes Back" demonstrates, when the targets are this thick on the ground it's sometimes hard to get a clean shot.

Take the Governor's race. In an early sketch a wild-eyed Benjamin Franklin (Mike Fotis) explains to a hapless voter that, while one did it fast and one did it slow, both major parties came up with major losers for candidates. It's less an edgy jab than an acknowledgement of the obvious, judging by the audience's rueful response. Similarly, a piece in which optometrist Joe Bozic discovers in the course of an eye exam that Michelle Bachman's eyes burn with hellfire seems a little too easy.

Overall, however, this revue is more hit than miss. Bobby Gardner's smug and smiling take on Tom Emmer is priceless, as he vainly tries to order a meal in a restaurant while singing a little ditty about how hard it is to be...Tom Emmer. Lauren Anderson as a Nike rep and Bozic as an agent come up with an ingeniously apt way to get Tiger Woods back on his game, much to the horror of his caddy.

There's a little snippet of everything in this show, from a political ad touting a toaster as a perfectly viable alternative to Bachman for Congress, to a desperately needy Ellie Hino explaining to her friends that since gay marriage has destroyed the sanctity of the institution she's become betrothed to her cat "Meow Gibson." Other targets include the introduction of the newest iPhone, the IMMIGRANT, which comes with an app for cheap landscaping, and a hilarious Univision broadcast done in high-school Spanish.

The comic highlight of the show is a spot-on sketch in which Josh Eakwright delivers a musical tribute to the "Ladies of the Supreme Court," accompanied by a trio of backup singers -- Anderson as a "spicy" Sonia Sotomayor, Hino as Elena Kagan and Bozic as a hot-to-trot Ruth Bader Ginsberg. It's the kind of moment that reminds us all why

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Brave New Workshop has been alive and lively for so many years.

Lisa Brock writes regularly about theater.

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