



## REVIEW: 'Chalk' by Alex Curtis at FRIGID Festival

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By Diana DiCostanzo

Putting words on paper to write a theatrical review gets more difficult when you see the infinite possibilities a character can create with just chalk and a black stage. How do you judge unbridled creativity and imagination? *Chalk* pushes the audience to challenge their expectations of reality and ask themselves, what if you could literally create *anything*? In essence, *Chalk* makes the audience re-imagine imagination.

In this charming, cartoon-like story, Alex Curtis plays a silent character that goes through a significant journey over the course of the play's 45 minutes. What is heartwarming about this lovable clown is that no matter what is thrown at him, he makes the best of his situation. Whether it is his inability to conquer his own coat rack or his inability to successfully woo a woman who gives him butterflies, every moment is graced with honesty and humility, which immediately bonds audience and actor. The character's endearing ineptitudes make the audience question whether they want to see him to succeed or fail. Success would be so satisfying, but failure is just so funny.

Curtis' skill at clowning is wonderfully apparent. Though the play contains no dialogue, there is much said. Enhanced by his signature shuffle, mundane tasks become presentational, mistakes become a seamless part of the show and knowing glances at the audience become all the words necessary to relay the story. His brilliant choreography of basic movements astound, due to both their complexity and simultaneous simplicity.

The most impressive aspect of this show, however, is the relationship Curtis builds with the audience throughout the entire piece. He starts like a skilled magician winning over an audience with simple tricks, then seamlessly transforms the audience into his scene partner, essentially creating a solo show were there is another "actor" present. As an audience, we give him encouragement to take risks, we witness him struggle and fail, we clap at his successes, we sigh at his heartbreaks, and we empathize with his attempts to get comfort. In return, we receive the gift of direct thanks from Curtis, who quite literally erases the fourth wall in the end in order to engage the audience individually and thank them for sharing the play's experiences with him.

It is tough to say who gets more out of the performance. Curtis is noticeably moved by the audience's engagement while the audience is grateful to have been able to watch him create a limitless reality where anything could be true. A simple room can transform instantly into a romantic chateau, the remnants of erased chalk and water can become a storm cloud outside a window, and chalk-drawn radios can also refuse to function unless they are plugged into a chalk-drawn outlet. Quite simply, *Chalk* is clever, theatrical magic.

*Chalk* played at the Kraine Theatre through March 4<sup>th</sup> as part of the FRIGID New York Festival. For more information, visit [www.FRIGIDnewyork.info](http://www.FRIGIDnewyork.info).

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### ABOUT #COTA



Center On The Aisle -- or #COTA) for short -- was founded by theater expert, Steve Schonberg in 2014, and the site now boasts a team of 15 expert writers and reviewers. Steve created the site to help casual theatergoers easily access informative and entertaining content to help them engage more with the theater, and make confident and informed decisions when selecting shows. With this mission, the #COTA team applies their deep theater knowledge and attendance at hundreds of shows a year to create the site's content. That's quite a task!

Covering Broadway, off-Broadway, cabaret, dance, music and more, the #COTA team provides a range of valuable perspectives to inform and engage readers. After all, the theater is part of our history, heritage and

cultural identity - it should be engaged in as often as possible. Welcome, again, to #COTA and please come again.



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