

Off the Beaten Track Theater

Where off, off off, experimental, downtown, and up and coming theater is reviewed.



Chalk: No words, No set, No problem.

Is it raining outside? Draw a roof. Feeling lonely? Draw a dog. Too quiet? Draw a radio. Chalk is a one man, no words, clown show about a guy who solves his problems by drawing the solutions on the wall behind him. The incredibly creative writer and performer of this piece, Alex Curtis, draws in the audience using only a hat, a coat, a coat rack and a stick of chalk.

Chalk is classic clowning with the unique gimmick of using the blackbox walls as a sort of canvas on which to draw the world. It starts small as Curtis stands miming a cigarette and drawing the smoke behind him. It gradually gets bigger as he then draws a house, a dog, a radio, and finally fireworks. As an audience member I could watch Curtis all day, wondering what amazing thing he would come up with next. Curtis is a true talent who can use the very bare minimum of resources to create a lush story. One highlight of the show was Curtis's use of the three panel revolving backdrop at the Kraine theater, turning them to reveal a pre-drawn ideal chalk world of vibrance as the music climaxed to reveal for the first time color in this back and white world. All this in an effort to woo an imaginary lover.

The one area left for improvement in Chalk is in its theme. It is clear that Curtis has done his research and as audience members we see the well-used tropes of the physical comedy world: the arm through the coat sleeve act, the kicking of the hat in an effort to pick it up, dancing with the coat rack ect. All of

these things are well done and examples of great classic clowning, but after seeing them executed so well, I was hoping they would be used to say something more, to pose some thematic question or leave the audience pondering some deeper meaning at the end other than, "huh, that was cool." I also found myself less interested in Curtis's coat hanger and hat gags as I was in his chalk games. I wanted more chalk stuff on the walls, because that's what made me feel that moment of joy and revelation. More of those please!

I sincerely hope Chalk continues its life in the theatrical world and finds more venues and audiences to play to. In an artistic climate of over produced, huge scale, big budget theater, Chalk stands as a great example of an artist creating an amazing world out of virtually nothing.

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