

The All-American Genderf*ck Cabaret

Rapscallion Theatre Collective at Under St. Marks

Reviewed by Thomas Riemschneider

March 29, 2010



PHOTO CREDIT
Karen Reinhard

At its best, "The All-American Genderf*ck Cabaret," by Mariah MacCarthy, is a refreshingly enjoyable lampooning of gender stereotypes: A Smirnoff Ice drinking, cardigan and bowtie wearing, presumed closet case turns out to be the best lover any woman has had, a chauvinist horndog (named Dick, of course) makes catcalls to hide his status as a virgin and his desire to own a yappy Pomeranian, and a hyperfeminist poses the compelling argument that ball sacs and not pussies are the most cowardly of genitalia. As the androgynous emcee and Dickensian spirit guide Taylor, Becca Blackwell deftly positions such characters into scenarios that strive to prove that "in a polarized world of pink versus blue, everyone deserves Technicolor."

In the beginning of the second act, nearly every "genderf*cker" earns an impromptu dream ballet sequence. Be that as it may, these dance elements develop the characters wonderfully, and it is fun to watch the entire cast shake it to Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" or see Miranda Noelle Wilson, as girly girl Allegra, do a tribute to "Flashdance" after being dumped by her studly boyfriend Adrian (Steve White.)

From the outset, the audience is told how each player's façade hides his or her true desires. Some performers bring out these undercurrents. As Devon, a personal trainer on a sexless streak, Sofia Urista shows how even the strongest of women can still be hurt, emotionally and, unfortunately, physically. Others do not. Timothy Ryan's turn as bitchy gay hairdresser DJ and Brendan Hunt's as the aforementioned Dick border on caricature when nuance is needed.

MacCarthy should be applauded for not coupling off absolutely everybody at play's end. Still, when Taylor proclaims "That's all, folks" after twirling each character offstage to live a Technicolor life, everything is a bit too neat and tidy. Yes, "The All-American Genderf*ck Cabaret" is a bold and entertaining discussion of gender identity, but it is far from the final word on the topic. Or at least let's hope it's not. There are many more colorful genderf*ckers for an enterprising playwright to paint.