

All-Around Inspirational Theater in North Park

Review by Jessica Dearborn

GB Productions' presents
the Ninth Annual

North Park Playwright Festival



25 new short plays
from around the
country

22 directors

over 40 actors

4 weekends

North Park Vaudeville
and Candy Shoppe

2031 El Cajon Blvd
San Diego, CA 92104

October 7 through 30, 2011
Fridays and Saturdays at 8 PM
Sundays at 2 PM

Admission \$14

Call 619 647 4958 for tickets
and information or visit
www.northparkvaudeville.com



I love the theater. Let me say that again (shouting style): I LOVE THE THEATER! With that said, you can imagine how thrilled I was to be asked to review the "Ninth Annual North Park Playwright Festival" at the **North Park Vaudeville and Candy Shoppe**. I wasn't sure what I was about to enter into, witness, feel, see...but I did know that there was a lot of heart going into this production.

Prior to my attending, I interviewed Jeff Bushnell, owner and producer, on the phone and he gave me background information to the theater that literally gave me the chills (not in a Halloweeny way). I discovered through speaking with Jeff that he and his wife, Summer Golden, owner, producer and artistic director, have had their hearts and souls in their theater company from the beginning. It was established in 2003 as a safe place for fledgling playwrights, actors, and directors to harness their unique, untouched talents under one roof. Not only that, but to allow a wide range of diversity that is rarely seen in other theaters. For instance, they developed what is know as the "STARS" program where under-utilized talent is welcomed with opened arms. This

talent consists of mentally challenged individuals who may not normally have an opportunity to strut their stuff across the stage, behind it, or in front of it.



Let me casually slide into the plays themselves. There were six one act plays, titled from beginning to end, ***The Secret of Jarlsberg***, written by Arthur M. Jolly; ***It Ate Houston***, written by Wil Denson; ***Oh Hell***, written by Dean Bevan; ***Look At Me***, written by Jayson De Los Santos; ***Made For Each Other***, written by Marissa Vaughan; and ***Famous***, written by Robert Thomas Noll.



So now that I've introduced you to the titles and the playwrights, I will now explain why I found them all to be so mesmerizing. To begin, my mind was a clean slate. I had no preconceived notions of what may or may not be. I wasn't sure what to expect from these playwrights. But their plays were all well written, thought provoking and inspirational. Clearly, each playwright had a goal in mind – precise and pointed. I was immediately drawn in by the fact that there was such little space to work within yet I was not focused on that as the story, actors, and stage settings were unfolding my imagination. First off, I noticed the little stage was utilized to its fullest and enveloped the soul of the writings. Furthermore, when the actors came out onto the stage, their presence was captivating – they owned the stage. From the stage settings to the actors performances (where not a beat missed nor a character slipped), to the vision the directors saw after reading the play they were to direct. I was immediately drawn into the captivating stories. I was trying to take notes but after a while, my pen escaped me without my notice as I was so drawn into the stories and characters. I cannot explain how I had an overwhelming desire to jump onto the stage and attempt to foretell the outcome of the applause that was soon to come. I had to sit on my hands and bite my tongue. Furthermore, as I watched and listened to the plays, I also had an ear open to the audience's reaction – laughter, ah's, catches of breath, and very loud clapping. I sat in my chair to collect myself for a few moments before I left and had no reason to run to the door.



I have to admit that I am kind of jealous of these playwrights as I have always fantasized about being one myself. But for now I have found a safe place to go to where I may dream, laugh, cry, and formulate about my own future as an unknown. This theater and the playwrights they have selected have been an inspirational. If we, as people that are mainly programmed to be robotic in our day-to-day lives are allowed to be that moved by people we've never even fathomed to meet, I would challenge you to research the above playwrights, read their works, know they have what it takes, and understand the stories they have to tell to inspire us all toward more artistic ventures in our own endeavors.



As for Jeff and Summer, I say thank you to you both for stirring not only an artistic community but a community at large that bleeds for expression and development. You have both blessed the theater with your dreams and passions and I secretly hope to be apart of that one day.

If you would like more information about the theater, please visit their website:
<http://www.northparkvaudeville.com/>