

Dick Gregory/Mort Sahl – Terrific!; Unexpected Man – Exit Theatre; Rent Boy Avenue at Boxcar Playhouse; AIDS Gala with Stars Galore at Herbst

by Buzzin' Lee Hartgrave, 2009-07-24

DICK GREGORY / MORT STAHL - "TERRIFIC!"

It's a 'two for one' exhilarating evening of satire and political fun. Dick Gregory has still got that sparkle that made him one of the world's most sought after headline performers. Gregory keeps the audience fired up with his jabs about everyone and everything. No one is safe as he rolls out the puns. He also makes fun of himself, his culture and our culture. "I'm early – because you know what they say about Black Folk!" Gregory talks about his life. "I'm 76 and my wife is 71. And there are no prescription drugs between us."

Gregory is an anti-drug crusader and nutritionist. He is all about healthy living. And at 76, he still can jump on and off the stage. "Now, Mort Sahl who is coming up next is older than me. So, laugh hard and clap real loud -- you may see someone die up here." – he sez.

Just about that time, a cell phone goes off. Gregory looks up to the ceiling. "Is that you, Lord? That cell phone ring sounded like the bill was not paid." It was a very annoying ring, but got lots of laughs. As a matter of fact, everything that Gregory said on stage brought bent over laughs from everyone in the audience.

Gregory is also a philosopher: "The people that run the world have never worked." That is not only funny – but also true in my book. That is why everyone loves Gregory -- he has a way of making fun out of the hidden truths.

Though, most of his comments on life are about today -- he does go back into history now and then to let us know how it was way back then. "When I grew up, there was no T.V. We just listened to Tap Dancers on the Radio."

This knocked the audience out of their chairs: "Cigarettes will give you Cancer. Oral Sex will not give you Cancer!"

Some People have called Gregory the Black Mort Sahl (who follows Gregory in the show). And Gregory's friends call Sahl the "White Dick Gregory." They both draw their material from current events, politics and social movements. Gregory is a Master Comic. He's subtle -- but, Oh – so powerful!



Mort Sahl

MORT SAHL – AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY TELLER

“I’m older than Dick Gregory. I just paid off my student loan” -- Sahl sez.

About Obama: “The President is the only guy that has bigger ears than Ross Perot.”

A lot of the time Sahl admits – “everything I say is true – oh, sure I do embellish a bit.” Like this one: - “Wal Mart put out a notice that they were looking for help. The parking lot was full of people looking for jobs. Sarah Palin was there – she was the only one they didn’t hire.”

Mort Sahl is the Political Comedy God. Not only has he been one of the most enduring stage performers in the world. Sahl has also written for the movies, T.V. and other comedians.

Sahl may be older, but he still has that great strong voice, and his memory is sharp as a tack as are his sly insights into the political pot. That pot never stops stirring, and Sahl keeps up with what’s going on. He had the current *New York Times* with him. “I get all my ideas from the newspaper,” he says. Yes, in Sahl’s world – Newspapers are more than just the funnies – they are a Gold Mine of material about the upside down world of politicians.

Sahl sometimes delves into other areas. “Let’s take Gay Marriage. Which I’m in favor of. Why should THEY be happy.” Good question and answer – and funny as hell. He continues with that subject. Oscar Wilde. He wrote: ‘It is love that dare not speak its name’ Now it won’t shut up!”

AS A WRITER, MORT SAHL IS CREDITED WITH 18 SCREENPLAYS AND HAS BEEN A SPEECH WRITER FOR 3 PRESIDENTS. And he tells many funny stories about these Presidents. Surprisingly, even Ronald Reagan was funny. And George Bush Junior also came out with a few zingers. Maybe he missed his real calling. Just wondering.

Sahl and Gregory are both “Utterly Irreverent!” This show is full of uproarious surprises and laughs. Terrific guys. They both fire up the stage. Don’t miss! Every gesture and glance is perfection.

RATING: FOUR GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE!!!! (highest rating) – trademarked –

When you go: The Razz Room. Hotel Nikko
Through July 26, 8pm
222 Mason
<http://www.therrazzroom.com/>



Ken Ruta in "Unexpected."

THE UNEXPECTED MAN

WHAT HAPPENED? How is that two accomplished actors like Ken Ruta and Abigail Van Alyn bore us? Well, at least me. The play is selling out like Denny's Grand Slam breakfast (which has too much Sodium and no substance).

Now this is not the fault of the acting, which is superb – No, it is the fault of this pretentious play that is really about nothing. French playwright Yasmina Reza is an expert at writing about nothing. Remember her "Art"?

The story takes place on a train. Now, I take trains all the time (I won't fly) – and believe me those trips were much more exciting than the boring train ride with a novelist and a woman (Martha). Not only do they sit alone and think out loud. She knows who he is. She has his book and sees his picture on the jacket. So clickity clack the train runs along like a Toonerville trolley. But, there are no train noises and no clickity clacks in this train ride. Nothing, Nada, Zip. No noises except the drone of the monologues that go on endlessly.

The novelist is bitter about his life and thinks of himself as a personal failure. The woman Martha reminisces about her own sort of nothing life, and how much the novel reminds her of friends that are not around anymore.

Near the end – they finally talk to each other. The novelist never reveals his identity. He just plays cat and mouse with the woman that is holding his book. He even tries to persuade Martha that the author (him) is not a very nice person. Hoping, of course that she will compliment him.

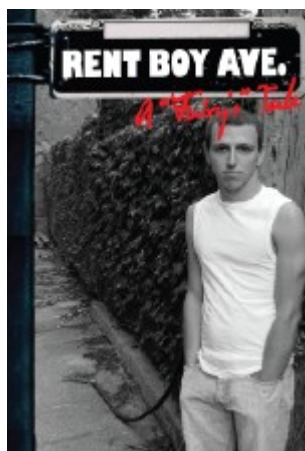
If there was direction in this play – it was very subtle. It seems that the actors were given free rein to do whatever they wanted to. However, it was an amazing feat to see these two excellent actors spill out so many words. Lets just say – that this play was "My. Dinner With Andre" on a train. If you loved that pretentious piece of crap – then you will love this play. Oh, and the unexpected part? That it is selling out!

Note: The play has been extended at the Exit

RATING: TWO GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE!! –trademarked-

AT THE EXIT THEATER

Info: <http://www.sparestage.com/>



RENT BOY AVENUE

CLEVER TITLE 'Rent Boy Avenue' is. It really gets you interested. And that is why I decided to see this new rock musical at the Boxcar Playhouse.

The story more or less follows a young man "David" who has just arrived in town. Well, actually it's more like he stumbled onto a world that is graffiti marred with streets littered with junk – Human and otherwise. There are older men who are looking for a quickie in a dark alley. There are young men who risk their lives for a few bucks to buy some food.

This is a RENT-ESQUE kind of musical. There is a prostitute who is fighting a drag addiction and a Pimp who keeps her working night and day. Who said that Pimps were nice? The people, who live and work the streets in this neighborhood, call it the street of 'Shit and Shame.'

The young man may have been innocent when he arrived, but he soon becomes part of the hustler trade. Now if this all sounds familiar to you – it's because it is. Polk Street used to be the Mecca for the hustler trade. But now they have moved to other areas including the seamy Tenderloin where people flop all over the sidewalks where and do drugs and scream and yell at each other. This play brings that into play quite nicely.

The acting is sometimes remarkable, and in some of the situations it's not quite that good. Probably the best actor on the stage is Donald Currie, who plays the Dirty Old Man. He keeps your attention. There is a problem with the music. The Orchestra (which is good) is a little too loud making it difficult to catch the words in the songs. When "Rent" first came to the Golden Gate, they also had the same problem. It was so over-amped that you couldn't understand a word. The balance between the vocals and the Orchestra needs to be adjusted. We missed a lot. And that could make the difference in how the show is perceived.

Also, the music written by Michael Mohammed has some sweet notes – but what this musical needs is at least one big block buster number. The songs sounded pretty much the same. There was nothing that stayed in your mind. When the Broadway musical "Rent" came back to town – they learned their lesson and turned down the volume. It made the musical more accessible and more enjoyable. Now, we knew what the story was about.

There are nine actors in 'Rent Boy Ave. – and they worked their butts off. Bobby Bryce as the innocent David has a charming voice for singing. When he talks he sounds like Michael Jackson. Michelle Ianito (Sister Mercy) was very impressive and Bradley Mena as the hard-edged Mark really brought out the reality of the streetwise punk. Danelle Medeiros (Jackie the Prostie) gave a

good reality look at what those girls go through.

See, here's the thing. On a low budget, this Theatre group did a bang up job. I think that they have something here. And with some fine-tuning -- I think that it could be better. Remember this is an oft-told story -- so they need to come up with something that really stuns the audience. Just looking at these lost souls is not enough. Give one of the actors a real blockbuster song that will blow the roof off the place -- and hits-ville can't be far behind.

RATING: THREE GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE!!! --trademarked-

AT THE BOXCAR PLAYHOUSE

505 Natoma Street (at 6th Street)

Closes Aug. 8.

More info and Tix: <http://www.boxcartheatre.org/>



Tony Award Winner John Lloyd Young will be at the Herbst Theatre Aug. 2. Photo by Brad Calcaterra."

NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOWBUSINESS

YOU KNOW YOU LIKE IT -- SO NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE TICKETS TO 'HELP ON THE WAY' 15TH ANNIVERSARY GALA.

This year's all-star benefit concert features celebrities from Broadway, TV and Film including American Idol star. It's a jazz, pop and live performances really up close. Four Bay Area AIDS Service Agencies will be beneficiaries this year. The Gala will be at the gorgeous and comfortable Hearst Theatre. It's a wonderful little Jewell Box that will glitter like no other night.

Star Susan Anton will be there. Illusionist Jim Bailey will be there. Star Carole Cook will dazzle you with her antics. Tyne Daly's bright star power will get to you. Ricki Lake (Hairspray) will be there. American's Idol's Kimberley Locke will knock us out with her voice. From the Jersey Boys -- John Lloyd Young will Jersey Boys us. More stars may be added. This is only a partial list in this once in a lifetime 'No Business Like Showbusiness.

The Glitter and Glamour all takes place on Sung Aug. 2, 2209. at the Herbst Theatre IT'S STAR-STUDDERED, BENEFITS AIDS CHARITIES.

MORE INFO: www.helpisontheway.org.

Phone: 415-273-1620

For late breaking news: www.twitter.com/famereporter



The Photo of Lee Hartgrave Boy Reporter is by Jim Ferreira – Film Noir & Hollywood Glamour.
www.lafterhall.com.

YOUR COMMENTS ARE WELCOME HERE: leehartgraveshow@yahoo.com

PRESS STUFF: buzzmixer@mac.com

Podcasts, blogs, vblogs: web.mac.com/buzzmixer/