

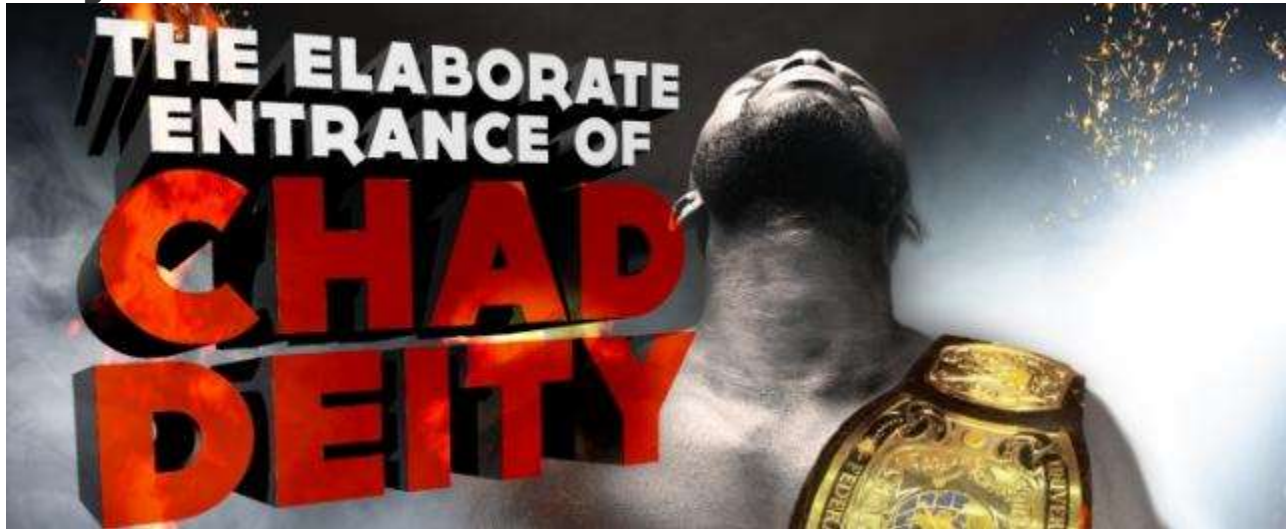
TOTALTHEATER.COM

The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity

Total Rating:

***1/4

Images:



Opened:

April 7, 2017

Ended:

April 30, 2017

Country:

USA

State:

Florida

City:

Sarasota

Company/Producers:

Asolo Repertory Company

Theater Type:

Regional

Theater:

Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts - Cook Theater

Theater Address:

5555 North Tamiami Trail

Phone:

941-351-8000

Website:

asolorep.org

Running Time:

2 hrs, 30 min

Genre:

Satire

Author:

Kristoffer Diaz

Director:

Jen Wineman

Review:

No ordinary production, *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* takes place in an arena surrounded by audience. They're in turn surrounded by giant moving projections of what happens on center stage, a metaphoric boxing ring that, also in turn, becomes an actual one. With lights flashing and rap and hip-hop blaring throughout actors' and audience spaces, the show offers a central monologue together with environmental and interactive theater. To what purpose?

The show delves brashly into race relations in America, just as it does into a sport as a violent business transaction and fake piece of frenetic entertainment. With a split focus, it also goes story-wise mainly into the life and American Dream of mostly-narrator Macedonio "Mace" Guerra.

Mace is both literal and actual fall guy for Chad Deity, as he has been for others. (Pierre Jean Gonzalez does win as the most compelling actor of the most interesting character in the play.) He is the hired flunky of EKO (Scott Aiello, stern and rightly detestable). This white man controls the wrestling game, and not just as the fights' emcee.

Garrett Turner reflects the show's title when he appears as Chad Deity, the African-American champ who throws out money (also fake) entering the ring to defend his championship. Hispanic Mace's defeat at the hands-and-feet-and-arms of Chad is as arranged as are the defeats of other contenders, like The Bad Guy (much booed Chris Silvio, evil-looking indeed). It's not hard for Brandon Fillette as Cameraman to film the ring action for all to see — in real time — projected on the surrounding walls.

Mace would really like to get back to the kind of wrestling he admired as a kid. He sort of stumbles on an Indian, Raji Ahsan's calm, assured Vigneshwar "VP" Paduar, and Mace decides to be his backer. Dealings with EKO necessitate a stupid kind of racial stereotyping. Mace, of Puerto Rican descent, becomes a Pancho Villa-like Mexican (complete with big brimmed sombrero), and VP must pretend to be a Muslim. EKO names him The Fundamentalist. So a fight between Chad and VP becomes political with a streak of religious as well as racial stereotyping.

Eventually the showmanship tires and much of the satire sinks. It's unsure whose story is paramount. It should be Mace but his significance dims. VP's role is too short and pat. When Chad goes offstage, he isn't missed for a moment.

What is the importance of all the race relations and how do they affect us? What is the point of the satire? If it's corrective, how? If it's just destructive, is anything left and if not, why not? Is it possible the play,

like the fake sport it considers and re-enacts, is just meant to be a spectacular entertainment?

Spectacular it is! Asolo Rep's director Jen Wineman, her actors, and the crew have pulled out all the stops on staging and sound. One has to pray that the wrestlers can keep up their realistic moves and falls without injury for the full run of the show.

Cast:

Scott Aiello, Pierre Jean Gonzalez, Garrett Turner, Raji Ahsan, Chris Silvio (stand-in opening night for Jamin Olivencia), Danielle Renella, Brandon Fillette

Technical:

Set: Tim Mackabee; Costumes: Eduardo Sicango; Lights: Alan Edwards; Sound: Lugman Brown; Projections: Alex Bacokoch

Critic:

Marie J. Kilker

Date Reviewed:

April 2017