

ONE GLITZ WISH – WHAT A BUNCH OF QUACKS

06/10/2014 by [thebadoracle](#)

A REVIEW BY ACHILLES FEELS

(The Feel's Disclaimer: I love Baltimore, I love Baltimore theatre... but I think it could be better. I'm reviewing alongside The Bad Oracle as a way to help expand what theatre is, can be, and will be in Baltimore. I'm going to tell people how awesome they are, or how awesome they could be. A lot of the shows I review have actors, directors, production staff, designers, or others that are my friends or even my arch-enemies. Even though I love and cherish these people (keep your enemies close!) I promise to be frank and honest in my reviews. I won't hold anything back, and praise will be duly delivered. I'm in the business of theatre myself, but I'm not a genius. I don't know everything. But I do know what I like and I know good theatre. Venues, box office people, ushers, tech folks, and program designers, please don't think you're off the hook. I'm looking at you too. If you don't like my opinion, I invite you to voice it in response to my reviews, but I reserve the right to rebuttal with a loving "fuck you." Some of what I say will be harsh, some will be sweet but I've got a weakness in my heel: BAD THEATRE.)

Last Thursday night, The Bad Oracle and her trusty sidekick: Achilles Feels (THAT'S ME!!) took a field trip to absurdity—sheer, utter, fabulously unrefined absurdity. What did we expect? Who the hell knows! We hitched our wagon to our trusty steed [*It was a Toyota Highlander-TBO*] and made our way to Church & Company to see The Strand's presentation of Kristin Harrison's *One Glitz Wish*.

Let me back up a sec.

I accidentally stumbled across *One Glitz Wish* on the interwebs. I was seeking new theatre companies to review and I wanted one we'd not yet had the chance to experience. I Googled around and found the Strand Theater Company (which I already knew existed)'s website promoting this rather confusingly titled new show. The show's description included a "mashup of Commedia Dell'Arte, cabaret, and drag."

Oh hell yeah. I'm *so* there.

But...why did I *accidentally* stumble across this show? Baltimore theatre makers: LISTEN UP. **Promote yo shit** (and I don't just mean make a Facebook event and invite your friends; *that's nowhere near adequate*). I was not even aware that the Strand was actively producing new work. I thought their building on Charles Street with the *fabulous* art nouveau facade was only a venue. BTW, what is going on over there? Does it not belong to the Strand anymore or need renovation or what? According to the new artistic director, Elissa Goetschius, they've decided to go nomadic, along with a zillion other companies in Baltimore, and produce wherever fate will take them. But *where*? Baltimore doesn't have enough practical (read: functional, safe, legal, affordable) theatre venues to support the array of so many in-the-wind companies. Sigh. This continues to be *huge* problem. [*Achilles, stop bitching and review the show.-TBO*]

But enough about all that (very important) shit. Let's review the SHOW!

The Strand had a very successful IndieGoGo crowdfunding campaign for *Glitz*, raising over 150% of their total fundraising goal with 65 donors. So, where the hell were those donors and all their friends? They were *not* at the show we attended, that's for damned sure. Shame on them if they all went to the free previews. In a house of about 30 seats, TBO and I were two out of six people [*It was really, hella awkward. I think Achilles ended up being the focus of 90% of the audience interaction. I mean, he does like attention, but it was ridiculous.-TBO*]. This is unacceptable, people. Get your ass out there and support Baltimore theatre. Seriously. *Drop the donut, cancel your Netflix account and go buy tickets to something live now* ([here's a good resource](#)).

Church & Company, according to Alec [*He gave us free wine!-TBO*], one of the owners, is being rented by a mish-mash of local organizations, and is literally somebody's living room. It's right above the Hunting Ground clothing shop in a broken-down old church. The venue opens up to huge vaulted ceilings, rustic hardwood flooring, and stained glass windows. It looks like something out of the Anthropologie catalog. We sat in un-matched vintage chairs, gawked at the architecture and wondered what we were in for.

The set before us was pink as pink can be. I hate pink, but this color choice worked well for the show. Glitter, pink sequined drapes, painted tiles (that could have used just a touch of love from Heather Mork), some simple projections in empty vintage gilded frames and that was it. All of those details were attached to a castle-like facade reminiscent of The Enchanted Forest in Ellicott City. The house lights click off, the club-music blares and the show begins with a dance number consisting mostly of the cold shoulder roll and walking around to the beat in lines. With this

highly-abstracted choreographed opening I was beginning to think the evening was going to be tragic [*Totes.-TBO*].

One Glitz Wish is about a group of young “girls” all competing -cut-throat style- for the “biggest glamour crown in the world”. This magical crown on your Aquanet’ed hair !poof! allows your one true wish to come true! *Automagically!* WOW! We see the pressure on these poor little girls push each of them to their emotional breaking point. Some of them explode, some of them scheme, some slander, and some of them just nervously quack and lay eggs. No seriously. There was egg laying involved.

Here’s where we get all “Theatre Of The Absurd”. It was hard to tell if the over-the-top nature of this show was attempting to lighten more serious themes rooted in feminism, transgender rights, racial tension, blanket equality. Are we supposed to take these ridiculously farcical (and stereotypical! There was even a stage mom!) behind-the-scenes mini-stories seriously and feel for these girls? Was there a moral take home? Who the hell knows? One thing is for certain: none of it matters because it was fully agreed that The Bad Oracle and myself have not had such a *blast* at a show in quite some time. This shit was *funny*, people. Really. clucking. funny. I laughed so loud at some points TBO turned to me and gave me the stink-eye [*That’s not true. The Bad Oracle never has an expression that is less than lovely and perfect at all times.-TBO*]. And then I got scared and just whimpered in the corner sipping my juice box.

Most of that humor came from the performances. Stage mom and (literal) lioness Mama Leonie (Mazie Baskin) was annoyingly trashy and played exactly as expected. Baltimore Hampden meets angry New Yorker wanna-be bourgeoisie. No artful choices or surprises there. Mama Leonie’s “daughter” Andi, (Mary Myers) belted her lines *way* too loudly at times. If Mama is boisterous and irritating, Daughter is 1900-seat-theater shrill. SRSLY hon, come the fuck down a little. Other than the occasional ear-bleed, Myers’ portrayal of a conflicted prepubescent...uh...girl...is hilarious, touching, and honest. Cutie-pie Madison (Emily Hall) is adorable, and her stage presence grows on you. I was totally rooting for her the whole way. Playing beauty pageant winner wanna-be Destinie, Latia Stokes *truly* makes you believe she will cuttabitch if you get in her way. The true sparkling diamond in the cast, though, was Samrawit Belai. Belai’s trying-to-hold-it-all-together host Arlen Pied’Mallard was a goddamned scream. Ladies and gentlemen, meet a FABULOUS new addition to the Baltimore theatre scene. Making her hon debut in this production, Belai is stunning. Her voice is spectacular, her acting and comic timing flawless, and her use of body language and movement to support emotion was spot-on. She even had me clutching my pearls in laughter with an unplanned and well managed costume malfunction! It is not that everybody else did poorly, *quite the contrary*; it’s just that Ms. Balai’s sparkle shined a bit brighter in this 95-minute explosion of

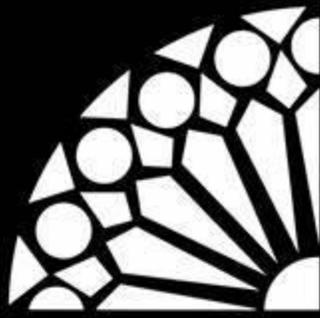
glitter. Speaking of 95 minutes: the show was overlong. Strand: fix that now! This show could easily be 75 minutes if all the air was removed from the costume and scene changes and the pace of the dialogue picked up.

Oh, and now we have to talk about this. I don't want to sound harsh, that's not my goal, but it's my job to say it: lighting by Alec Lawson was dreadful. Perhaps he didn't have the proper equipment or time to execute a fully realized design, but that's **no excuse**. Budget properly, plan accordingly, allot yourself the required resources, even if bare minimal. A large array of lighting, focused flat in the face of the actors and switching on and off in glaring bursts is, unfortunately, not a lighting design [*Yeah, it kind of looked like the actors were performing by way of carheadlights.*-TBO]. We sat in the front row and I actually cast a shadow on the back of the set with my chrome dome. Not cool. I'm not trying to be mean or catty. I'm trying to point out when fixable laziness contributes to the overall quality of theatre in Baltimore. Also: Church & Company, light your exit stairwell. That's a deathtrap waiting to happen [*Jesus, I agree! We tripped in the dark, dark, DARK after the show and the people behind us were like dominos. Also, maybe move that giant piece of furniture on the landing unless you enjoy a quick game of "How Fast Can the Audience Fall Down the Fucking Stairs".*-TBO]

Makeup & hair design (Samantha Trionfo) was exceptional. The masks (Nick Martin) as objects were beautiful, very well constructed, and helped to blur the lines of gender. Unfortunately they were not as well manipulated as they could have been. Costumes (Kitt Crescenzo) did a great job supporting characterization and were a delight to see on stage (I bet that's where most of the IndieGoGo fundraising money went. Next time: more for lighting!). Projections (Rachel Dwiggins), sometimes contributed to the overly-extended running time, but worked really well for introducing each scene.

The Bottom Line: Glitter, bitches. GLITTER. Need I say more? I had such a great time laughing alongside TBO. It's a little slow to start, but after the pendulum gains momentum, this is fabulously sparkle bombed train wreck (and I do mean train wreck that "gotta-look-can't-look-away" kind of *intentional* way). If you're as into "slightly uncomfortable funny that makes you question reality" as we are, then get your ass up and see *One Glitz Wish*. You *will* have an automagic blast! Rollicking fun!

Running at [Strand Theatre Company](#) until June 21st.



STRAND
THEATER CO.

ONE GLITZ
WISH

BY KRISTIN
HARRISON
DIRECTED BY
TARA CARIASO

Church & Co
3647 Falls Rd.
Hampden

May 29-June 21, 2014

STRAND-THEATER.ORG

