

Exhibitionism – *Local Arts Reviews*

By Ada Calhoun



In The House of the Moles: Live, Love, Get the Fuck Up!

The Off Center, through March 18

Running Time: 2 hrs

Elvis' "Love Me Tender" bookended Terry Galloway's recent solo performance *Out All Night and Lost My Shoes* at Hyde Park Theatre. That song exemplifies what the mistrusted performance-art genre, in the capable hands of local heroine Galloway, is all about. *Out All Night* is an intimate, highly articulate monologue about being deaf, queer, suicidal, alive, surrounded by death, and from a crazy family.

With her new full-length play, *In the House of the Moles*, Galloway takes the crazy family element and runs with it. Putting on her show is the local, exceptionally talent-rich troupe the

Rude Mechanicals, who Robert Faires referred to in a recent *Chronicle* feature as Galloway's theatrical "twins." Galloway and the Rude Mechs are indeed an amazing match, with the Rude Mechs' capacity to do just about anything pushed to the limit by Galloway's "trouble with a capital Q" imagination. Directing is the impeccable Rude Mech Shawn Sides, who did such an amazing job with *Lipstick Traces* a few months ago.

"Live, love, get the fuck up!" is one of the first lines we hear from Peg, the despotic mother in her pre-curtain video appearance. Peg also talks about the emptiness of vanity and rambles on in a slip and bathrobe with equal parts charm and hideousness. She is the mother from the musical *Gypsy*, albeit the pseudo-comedic, postmodern, performance-art version. And as in *Gypsy*, boy, has Mom screwed up her kids. In thanks, Peg's kids do a vaudeville send-up of their hated, beloved, recently dead Mama.

Catherine Glynn as Inga/Polly (forced in her youth to wear ruffled underwear and continually bend over) is a nose-wrinkling knockout with an obscure, breathy accent, game-show-hostess posture, and a magnetic presence evocative of Ginger on *Gilligan's Island*. Lana Lesley, who did a brilliant job in *Lipstick Traces*, is back in a completely different guise: Jinx/Shy Little Miss, a blond, grubby, squeaky, squawky lunatic of a girl in a white sailor dress. Her face awash with delirious raptures and confusions, Lesley makes unbelievable, otherworldly noises and belts out her songs for all they're worth, particularly when she pulls an Ophelia later in the play and does a hysterical (in every sense of the word) flower-song.

Skits like a perverse Punch and Judy show and themes like "Beware of the dead" (the dead, by the way, lurk as that dust circling above you) reinforce Galloway's repeated assertion that nothing is too sick to laugh at. For Galloway, Death is often accompanied by a perky piano number (Golden Arm Trio's score is, by the way, stellar, a dead-on blend of dark and light). And if a perky piano won't do, some slapstick will. Slapstick is one of misery's stranger bedfellows -- and better matches. It worked wonders during the Great Depression, and here it is again to nurse the weary through their desperate plight.

The doomed (i.e., "ugly, queer, and troublemaking") daughter, played by Sarah Richardson, speaks the final words, "Love is always what I was looking for." As in any show where the author is out on a limb, a lot of people will leave without connecting to Galloway's message and bared heart. Some, however, undoubtedly will by the end of her work love her tender. And those who don't connect with Galloway will still be able to bask in the clever, maniacal glory that is the Rude Mechs' forte.