



BRING YOUR SNOWSHOES MOTHERF***ERS

[ZAK ROSEN](#) 1:30 AM, FEB 02, 2018

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"I want to kill him. I hate his Adam's apple."

"How many Russian bears does it take to rig an American presidential election?"

"In the words of Hegel, I took a shit today."

"The premise of the joke is..."

"Field Guide" by Rude Mechs is an absolutely f@#&ing hilarious work of art. A devised piece that tells the story of "The Brothers Karamazov" by Dostoyevsky, the production takes what might ordinarily seem like a stuffy and difficult-to-stay-awake-through story and imbues it with absolutely delightful whimsy, surrealism, introspection, sadness and humor, from deadpan to absurd. When the little voice that tells you to silence your cell phone came out of the speakers, sounding very timid and idiosyncratic, it was obvious that this was going to be great. That same voice makes an appearance halfway through the performance in the form of a man who walks onstage in a bear suit (yes, a bear suit) and gives a monologue about the complicated relationship he has with his father who is still a bear. That's part of what makes this show so fascinating. It has so many ridiculous asides and inside jokes with itself. The characters are caricatures. But there are also moments of deep sadness and humanity and personhood. Multiple times actors break the fourth wall, acknowledging their status as performers, even discussing their own experiences with nonmonogamy or the deaths of family members whom they hated.

The Rude Mechs are ensemble devisers, and as such they credit everything that happens to all the members of the group working together to create the art we see onstage. That being said, while all the actors are extraordinary, there are a few standout performances worth highlighting. Mari Akita, a performance artist and choreographer, plays the spiritual brother Alyosha, a soft-spoken, occasionally levitating good soul. Akita's stillness feels full of meaning and intention as opposed to a lack of energy that one could imagine performances of the character suffering from. When the holy man to whom Alyosha is devoted dies, Akita conveys the grief of the character through a dance performance that is chilling and enthralling and full of despair. Thomas Graves, meanwhile, plays the intellectual brother Ivan. Graves' performance is a perfect parody of the pompous, foolish faux-intelligence that any character ever labeled as "the intellectual" in any medium should have. He is a source of many repeated bits in the show, and they never fail to make everyone laugh.

There are a few off-color moments in the play. While misogyny is a facet of several of the characters, which is endemic in the universe of the novel, and was translated well onstage with commentary, there were a few cringeworthy jokes distinct from that. Although these jokes felt very out of touch with the spirit of the play, the comedy of the play was otherwise, though often deadpan and dark, very respectful.

It is also worth noting that the tech of the play was amazing. The set, a series of mostly cardboard set pieces, lent itself well to the events onstage and was at times made to move around seemingly of its own accord. The choreography has already been praised in part, and this worked at times with the lighting to create dreamlike scenes that pulled the audience in and conveyed meaning very well through movement. The best example of this would be the meeting of Grushenka (Hannah Kenah) and Dmitri (Lana Lesley), a powerful, erotic mesmerization that included the eating of spaghetti. And the sound design was just as brilliant, creating soundscapes and providing music that augmented everything that happened but never detracted from anything onstage.

"The Brothers Karamazov" is a very long novel, one that I have never read, but that I imagine would be very hard to follow. This play, however, was very easy to keep straight. Everything was clear, and it was wonderfully presented. And though it's impossible for me to say whether it captured the spirit of the novel (though I like to think it did), the play definitely had a spirit to it. There were so many things that happened in this play, but between not wanting to spoil anything and not wanting to go on too long, I have to leave them out. You've got to witness them for yourself. Please, for the love of the God that may or may not exist, GO SEE THIS PLAY!

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