

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Jori Ketten

Fast, Poetic, Electromagnetic

by **Ellen Chenoweth**

READER ADVISORY: Recommended listening while reading this review is [You've Really Got a Hold on Me](#). The song is a prominent recurring presence in the show.

There are only two people in *The 7-Person Chair Pyramid High Wire Act*, and no high wires, and no chairs. It's okay though, because the two people are Donna Oblongata and Patrick Costello and they represent the following cast of characters:

A bat (named Batticus)

The electromagnetic spectrum

A yeti

A cave-dwelling rope-maker

Charles Darwin

Costello and Oblongata bring their world-class imaginations to the task of weaving a story with these disparate elements.

It's a story in a box, with everything nearly contained in a tricked-out push cart, with trapdoors and folding trees and an old-fashioned slide projector, complete with satisfying analog *thwack* as one slide advances to the next. The costumes are also a marvel. Oblongata and Costello both act as the electromagnetic spectrum and sport fabulous, tight, glittery concoctions that cover every inch of flesh.

Much of the show is explanatory, covering topics that you might not have wondered about before. Batticus tackles resting bat face: "We have faces built to look like we don't care, but we do!" The electromagnetic spectrum operates "between the speed of sound and light."

There is a key difference between a hunt and a quest. A song is a simple machine, with many utilitarian purposes. The text is fast and virtuosic and poetic. Occasional pauses offer a welcome chance for the brain to catch up with the ideas.

The piece is a paeon to seekers of love and adventure. The yeti goes to buy shoes for a dance contest with a prize of a boat voyage to a new land. A skeptical salesperson tries to interest her in “shoes for treading water,” from the store line of shoes for “stability and geographic reliability.” Our adventurous heroine declines to purchase and wins the contest anyway, with an impressive dance move called “Bend Your Knees.” Stable shoes be damned.

At the end, one of our electromagnetic narrators posits that miracles may not be possible, but this lo-fi, rickety cart-stage and its ingenious human operators offer a small exhibit to the contrary.

The 7 Person Chair Pyramid High Wire Act, Der Vorfuhreffekt Theatre, Panorama. Fringearts.com/035.

By Ellen Chenoweth
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