

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Shaken, Stirred, and Aroused

by Whitney Weinstein

Burlesque-N-Beyond was celebrating its tenth anniversary in the FringeArts festival with a two-night line-up of dancers including the Cheesecake Burlesque Revue from Canada and hosts Melody Mangler and April O'Peel. Each show had a second set with live music played by the psychobilly band The Rectors.

HoneyTree EvilEye is a new personal favorite. I recently saw her in [Misconceptions](#), where her character was a high-pitched muppet. In Burlesque-N-Beyond, she was a sultry woman in command, dressed in black and arousing screeches from onlookers. Burlesque is a place of power and intrigue, of lust and allure, hard and soft. As she shimmied her tassels on top of the La Peg bar, I gawked in admiration.

It's costume and creativity, satire and sensuality. One moment I watched a sexy clown dance to a metal version of "The Chicken Dance" and the next a face of orgasmic pleasure as a glove was removed between clenched teeth.

Burlesque, unlike stripping, has an element of artful planning. It's a late-night cocktail of athleticism, shaken with tease and plot. Aida Bummcake dressed in 1920s fashion: a blonde, finger-waved wig complemented her black and gold dress. Later she revealed herself clad in only a green boa and diamond necklace. She was confident and cool, which made her all the sexier.

While each cast member was playing a character, they were also sharing intimate pieces of themselves. It was refreshing to be in a place that celebrated the curvaceous, gendered form. These performers had an ample amount of physical capacity and more self-assurance than I often see on a stage with the strongest ballerinas, whose slender bodies are commonly prized.

"Built on spit, faith, and raffle tickets, [burlesque is] edge... a positive energy that protests all the bias in the world," claimed Count Scotchula, the third of the evening's emcees. The Count explained that, in burlesque, vaudevillian principles have co-existed with political commentary of the day; the layering of costumes provided surprise and suspense. The authentic burlesque that Burlesque-N-Beyond presented has an intelligence derived from literary, theatrical, and other sources.

Burlesque is a celebration of all that is human as well as a protest against the inhumane. It is also an escape from the world of formalities. In an evening where I was not only invited, but encouraged, to clap and howl, I found a surging enthusiasm. With each bra circled overhead, with each act of indulgent undressing, my unabashed appreciation deepened for our unique selves.

Burlesque-N-Beyond, FringeArts, Sept. 21-22, <http://fringearts.com/event/burlesque-n-beyond-sugarhustle>

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