



CurtainUp

The Internet Theater Magazine of Reviews, Features, Annotated Listings

A CurtainUp Los Angeles Review *bobrauschenbergamerica*

By [Evan Henerson](#)

Look, everything overlaps, doesn't it? Is connected some kind of way. Once you put it all together, it's just obvious. I mean, tie a string to something, and see where it takes you.



Jennifer Etienne Eckert and Eric
Bunton
(Photo: Debi Landrie)

When you think about it, this was really a match made in mashed-up paradise. Robert Rauschenberg, the American collageist as seen through the eyes of Charles L. Mee, a playwright who borrows everything from everywhere — mythology, current events, soap opera strands — and tosses it all up on stage in a big crazy quilt that somehow fashions itself into a play.

Director Bart DeLorenzo of the Evidence Room and the members of the SpyAnts Theatre Co. all clearly have the bug, and have brought the L.A. premiere of Mee's *bobrauschenbergamerica* to the Ford Amphitheatre's inside space. The play is Mee's take on how Rauschenberg, who died in 2008, might have seen the world had he been a playwright instead of a sculptor. The results are delightful if seriously quirky, — a series or largely unrelated musings on love, life, art, existence, the cosmos and cornball chicken jokes, not necessarily

in that order of importance.

There is a script (it's up on Mee's (re)making project website, www.charlesmee.com), but DeLorenzo's cast makes you feel like the universe could tilt ever so slightly and some things would end up differently. Indeed, here's betting that the group of elderly barbershop singers who came in for a parade sequence might give way to different roadside entertainment at a subsequent performance.

Our players are a derelict (played by Brett Hren), . . . a stargazer (Eric Bunton) and his dancer lover (Mark Slater) . . . a trucker (Danny Parker-Lopes) and his bathing beauty girlfriend (Maria Tomas) . . . a fickle love-seeking woman dressed up in Jackie O regalia (Jennifer Etienne Eckert) and the man she dumped (Adam Dornbusch). . . a disturbing pizza delivery guy (John Charles mother) named Bob and Bob's Mom (Mari Marks). Bob's Mom is either supposed to be Rauschenberg's mother or the pizza delivery boy's. I'm not sure which. I'm not sure Mee intends us to know for certain.

Rasuchenberg is honored in the title, and there are various slideshow musings by Bob's Mom

that frequently end with "art was not a part of our life." Otherwise, it's not difficult to see where Rauschenberg ends and Mee begins. Many of the playwright's signature oddities — spontaneous dance numbers, non sequiter emoting, extended musing on love — play giddily across DeLorenzo's staging. That said, the spirit of Rauschenberg is duly honored by DeLorenzo and company.

Props and set pieces, curios of all sorts dot Marina Mouhibian's set. The trucker's girl plays checkers from a rusty bathtub bearing a "No Parking" sign. A door frame, with a stuffed heron perched atop, evokes an empty and decidedly surreal landscape. Plaudits to prop master Hal Perry for finding a 12 foot bowling pin that never even gets used.

Mee's plays are not for the shy, and the cast members attack their roles with gleeful abandon. Particularly fetching is Eckert's Susan, defending her romantic choices while devouring the contents of a cake pan, and Tomas pouring out the ingredients for a martini on a plastic floor canvas and then proceeding to slosh through it. Parker-Lopes, sporting a trucker's beard, smoothly handles an assortment of wince-inducing chicken jokes, and everyone moves gracefully or with appropriate abandon to Ken Roht's choreography.

Praise also is due Breeze Braunschweig as the always skating, never speaking Roller Girl, a vision in 70s era beach shorts and tube socks who proves that you don't need lines to have an impact. What Braunschweig's Roller Girl is doing sitting at the same picnic table as Becker, Carl, Susan and the rest is anybody's guess. In the landscape of Mee's Rauschenberg, everything kind of melds even as it clashes. That's kind of the point.

bobrauschenbergamerica

By Charles L. Mee

Directed by Bart DeLorenzo

Choreography: Ken Roht

Cast: Breeze Braunschweig (Roller Girl), Eric Bunton (Allen) Adam Dornbusch (Wilson), Jennifer Etienne Eckert (Susan), Brett Hren (Becker), Mari Marks (Bob's Mom), John Charles Meyer (Bob, the Pizza Boy), Danny Parker-Lopes (Phil, the Trucker), Mark Slater (Carl), Maria Tomas (Phil's Girl)

Stage Manager: Hahnah Jackson

Set Design: Marina Mouhibian

Costume Design: Leah Piehl

Lighting Design: Christopher Kuhl

Sound Design: Cricket Myers

Prop Master: Hal Perry

Running Time: 1 hours and 35 minutes with no intermission

[Inside th] the Ford Amphitheatre, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood. (323)461-3673, www.FordTheatres.org.

From January 21 to February 28

Thu-Sat. @ 8pm, Sun @ 3 pm and 7 pm.

Reviewed by Evan Henerson, based on Jan. 28 performance