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'Gore' Wins in a Landslide of Laughter

GNP sketch group's fast-paced revue skewers the presidential election

Theater Review

Washington sketch-comedy group Gross National Product has been successfully skewering American politics and politicians since 1980. With its latest satiric revue, "Gore More Years or Son of a Bush," the talented group — John Simmons, Christine Thompson, Jim Ward, Michael Oosterom, Dorian Frankel, Christopher Pray — shows that it has lost none of its bite and relentless edge as it takes on the current presidential election race.

The 90 minutes (without intermission) with GNP are as swift as lightning, clever and truly funny. No one escapes the drop-dead, biting satire.

The revue takes place on a stage draped with American flags, bunting, a couple of lecterns and a mike. Credit Molly Bonneval for the set.

In the show, Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore comes to the mike with his vice presidential running mate, a smiling Joe Lieberman, in tow. When the somber Gore introduces Lieberman, Gore mangles every Yiddish word he attempts to pronounce.

Microsoft's Bill Gates — self-effacing, shy and timid — appears next, wearing the Gates uniform: white shirt and turtleneck sweater. As he quietly explains what he has in mind for the United States, the audience shudders.

When equally somber Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush speaks, he voices his solution to the country's aches and pains as "compassionate conservatism." When asked to explain, he falters — only to have the Compassionate Conservative Singers come to the rescue and sing his message.

In the speech of Bush's running mate, Dick Cheney, the audience learns that the "Republican party is, indeed, the party of inclusion — for the last two weeks." He goes on to explain that compassionate conservatism means just that: "compassion for conservatives."

And so it goes with GNP. Not all the slings and arrows are aimed at politicians. Other comic fodder for the talented group includes Jane Alexander, former head of the National Endowment for the Arts; Bush's wife, Laura; Gore's wife, Tipper; actor Charlton Heston; U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno; columnist Arianna Huffington; first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton; and commentator William F. Buckley Jr.

John Simmons is the unartistic director — or so it reads in the playbill's credits.

— Ed Kaufman

GORE MORE YEARS OR SON OF A BUSH
The Odyssey Theatre Ensemble and Gross National Product

Credits: Unartistic director: John Simmons; Playwrights: John Simmons, Joel Perry, Doug Cox, John Moody, Christine Thompson, Christopher Pray and company; Musical directors: David Zee, Richard Koldewyn; Scenic designer: Molly Bonneval; Lighting designer: Genny Wynn.
Cast: John Simmons, Christine Thompson, Christopher Pray, Jim Ward, Dorian Frankel, Michael Oosterom.