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Mr. Bengford

Musical Theatre, per. 6

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Avenue Q

On Thursday, January 14, I admired the comedic musical *Avenue Q* by Robert Lopez, Jeff Marx, and Jeff Whitty at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts, directed by Jason Moore. *Avenue Q* is a contemporary musical about life. About getting an apartment, getting kicked out of your apartment, finding and losing a job, learning about racism, falling in love, avoiding commitment, changing and being different, internet porn, hangovers and learning about the world all with puppets.

I loved the performance of Lisa Helmi Johanson who played the role of Christmas Eve. This character was absolutely hysterical and Lisa Johanson did a fantastic job of portraying it. Her character Christmas Eve was an immigrant from somewhere in Asia and she had this very thick Asian accent and she used that very comedic, such as in the opening song "It Sucks To Be Me," she had a part where she said "Sucka, sucka, sucka, sucka, sucka, etc. to be me," and her accent made it hysterical. Her character was very eccentric and lighthearted but tough at the same time and it really came across in how she talked. She also used her body well. She would prance around the stage every once in a while and she would hit her fiancé Brian. Her emotions were perfect for her character. She could be very sincere at times then turn around and be very unhelpful and rude. For example, when Rod was asking her for council and she gave him great advice then it turned around and became rude, but she didn't know that. She's a very funny

character and more masculine than her fiancé. She would be tough with him, like when she hit him and said to get a job or when she announced their wedding before he even knew about it. She had good relationships with the other characters, even the puppets. She talked to them as if they were real people and she had good chemistry with all the actors and puppets she encountered.

I also loved the performance of Jason Heyman who played the part of Nicky, as well as Trekkie Monster and other characters. He had a variety of voices he used to play different parts. Nicky had a throaty sort of voice and was very jolly while Trekkie Monster had a low growl to his voice and spoke in simplified English. Both were very easy to understand and both were very funny. Both of those puppets were often operated by two people, one doing the mouth/head and an arm, and someone else doing the other arm. These puppets were easier to see since both of their arms were being used often. Jason Heyman had great emotions that went very well with the characters. Nicky was very light-hearted and upbeat and Trekkie Monster was very grumpy and you could tell he enjoyed solitude and you could hear this all in their voices and see in how they moved their bodies. They all looked very good onstage together and they looked like that was their actual lives and that's where they actually lived. Their projection was just fine, and I'm sure the microphones helped.

It was a very cool set and really set the mood of a quiet and cheap street. It made everything seem that much more realistic. I loved how they brought things up from being the set such as The Empire State Building when Kate Monster was up there. The lighting for the show also added to the ambiance of the whole show. I liked how they would bring all the lights down when the TVs came out for the little videos. I also liked the crazy lighting during Princeton's proposal nightmare scene. There was minimal costumes and no makeup since the actors were

pretty much just puppets. However, some puppets did change costumes during the show. Such as Lucy the Slut had a revealing costume and a lot of curly hair when she first came on. After her surgery and transformation, she wore more of a modest outfit with hair pulled back. The music was very fun and I enjoyed it.

All in all, *Avenue Q* was an extremely unique and wonderful show. I can honestly say that I loved it and it was more than I hoped it would be. I hope to get the soundtrack and maybe even see it again someday.