

# Theatre Review: 'Avenue Q' at Horizon Theatre

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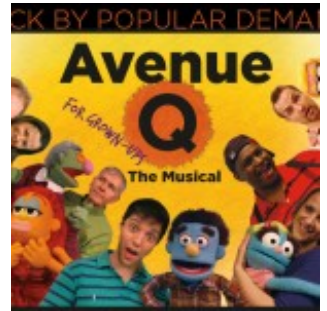
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It's every bit as good as they say it is; it deserved those seven Suzi Awards.

Last season Horizon Theatre pulled a coup de théâtre, shall we say, in not only selling out its entire run of the musical "Avenue Q," but in knocking off the big guns of Atlanta theatre (the Alliance, GA Shakespeare, Actor's Express) in winning all those Suzis (Atlanta's version of Broadway's Tony Awards).



Now awards are funny things: The biggest coup came in 2004 when "Avenue Q" won the Best Musical Tony over the megahit "Wicked"; the showbiz world still debates *that*. But of course we know that all awards are subjective.

Be that as it may, the good news "For Now" is that, having a cash cow on its hands, Horizon has brought the "Avenue" back for a run through March 11. I was tickled pink to hear this because I missed it last year, but have finally caught it—as well as a real case of Q-fever.

Although I must say up front that "Avenue Q" is a show for adults, I daresay your teenagers (savvy as they are these days, Lord knows) will thank you no end if you take them, and also think you're very cool. But it's not a show for children; enough now with the caveats.

If you missed it last season, here are some pithy words from Lisa Adler, Co-Artistic Director of the Horizon: "Avenue Q is an upbeat musical...that uses clever writing, catchy songs, funny videos, and puppets to tackle adult subjects like racism, unemployment, pornography, love, lust, and following your dreams. Told through the eyes of a young college grad and his neighbors on Avenue Q, this is a story of finding your purpose and passion in life—and of a diverse community coming together to support each other during tough times."

If all this seems a bit much for one show to tackle, not to worry: "Avenue Q" works with effortless grace and wit, and a cast that makes acting and singing look easy as pie. It didn't win those awards for nothing.

Suzi-winning Best Actor Nick Arapoglou has more talent and charm than the law should allow, with a matinee idol's irresistible smile. He plays Princeton, a college grad who wonders "What Do You Do with a BA in English?" (Anybody remember the book "Jobs for English Majors and Other Smart People"? Hmm—I think I just dated myself.) Princeton looks for and finds a cheap apartment on Avenue Q—and a host of colorful neighbors.

One of those neighbors is Christmas Eve (played by Suzi winner Leslie Bellair), whose "The More You Ruv Someone" is a comic highlight. Listen, there are simply no weak links in this cast. Here they are: Kate Monster, Mary Nye Bennett; Lucy the Slut, Jill Hames; Rod, J.C. Long; Nicky, Jeff McKerley; Trekkie, Shane Desmond-Williams; Brian, Matt Nitchie; Gary Coleman, Bernard D. Jones.

The direction and choreography, both first-rate, are by Heidi Cline McKerley.

The excellent band (music director S. Renee Clark) is cleverly positioned upstage right; the colorful set is by Moriah and Isabel Curley-Clay.

Some of the songs (ready?): "It Sucks to Be Me," "If You Were Gay," "Everyone's a Little Bit Racist," "The Internet is for Porn," "I'm Not Wearing Underwear Today," "School for Monsters," and others.

The Horizon is a perfect, intimate space for this show, and they are making the most of it. I got the feeling the night I saw "Avenue Q" that there were a lot of repeat customers there. That happens in a hit, which is what this is. Go.

For tickets and information, visit [www.horizontheatre.com](http://www.horizontheatre.com).