



Leprechaun vs. Spartan in dueling mascot spoof

By Bob Evans

Manon Halliburton and The Living Room Theatre



“O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!” said Sir Walter Scott; but, he never knew how tangled and convoluted a plot of deception could be unless he foresaw “The Mascot” by playwright Jerry Hickey, whose play made its world premiere Saturday night, April 7 at

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Kansas City's The Living Room Theatre.

Hickey's play centers on a overly-obsessed Notre Dame fan who plots to re-create Knute Rockne's fame by first finding a direct female ancestor, marrying her, impregnating her, naming their son after the most famous player and coach in Notre Dame history, Knute; and raising young Knute to be the recipient of all things good and associated with Knute Rockne. However, as said by Robert Burns: "Sometimes, the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry" (paraphrased from "To a Mouse").



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The play stems from Hickey's experience of actually growing up in the house formerly owned by Knute Rockne. Further, Hickey's ancestor was Rockne's godparent. Blood in the household ran true blue and gold (other than shamrock green for the famed Notre Dame Leprechaun mascot). So, the table was set for the feast as Hickey matured, surrounded by the proud tradition of Notre Dame football and legend.

“The Mascot” is the story of a young man who, like many other young adults, fears disappointing a parent, who imposes his own, personal, unfulfilled dreams upon his child. ‘The Mascot’ is his fantasy about how this dynamic might go awry,” Hickey said.



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Young Knute wants to go to University of Southern California and excel in the Spartan’s drama program, but Knute’s dad devised a plan to keep young Knute home in South Bend, Indiana and serve as the Notre Dame mascot, the famed Leprechaun.

The plot brings to mind a live-action cartoon. Animated, over-the-top characters cavort, tease, molest, maim, and plot against others in a Tom and Jerry format with the underdog needing to finish on top by out playing, out-maneuvering, and out-smarting everyone else. (Sounds like TV’s Survivor.) Besides the overly manipulative dad, the other nemesis in the play is a wannabe Leprechaun mascot who, unsuccessfully, continues to eye the mascot position.

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As roommates, Knute and Dooley (the wannabe mascot) create the fun and tension needed to bring the laughs. Think of Ex-lax humor, hives, allergies, and whatnot. Throw in an unsuspecting, accident-attracting clergyman, (resembling Wylie Coyote after skirmishes with the Roadrunner), a femme-fatal (a postulate in a convent with a Gothic streak), and several spirited cheerleaders (set and scene changers).

Sam Cordes as Knute and R.H. Wilhoit as Dooley contrast beautifully in this production. Wilhoit draws on his creative characterization for the overly-enthusiastic mascot-to-be while Cordes downplays his role as the mascot-not-wannabe. The blend of the two alter-personalities makes the show fun from start to finish. Throw in an oversexed nun in the form of Emma Carter, and the fun intensifies. The plot twists and turns constantly, with no one able to predict where the next scene leads.



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“I’m thrilled and proud to make KC the new home for ‘The Mascot.’ The community here has a commitment to the arts overall (and theatre specifically) unlike anywhere I have seen in the country. The quality of the actors and artistic team are simply world-class. And the KC folk don’t just welcome, but actually seek out innovative new works. There’s no one I’d rather see my play for the first time than the lovely people of Kansas City, who have welcomed me like one of their own.”

Written by Jerry Hickey, the production is helmed by director

(and KU professor) Peter Zazalli. Kansas City favorite Sam Cordes plays the title role of Knute, and is joined by Emma Carter, Coleman Crenshaw, Jen Mays, Matt Rapport, and R. H. Wilhoit, along with Alisa Lynn, Jake Gillespie, and Matthew Michael.

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The play features an original score composed by Jon Robertson. Other members of the production team are: Peter Zazzali, director; Dennis Christilles, scenic and lighting designer; Jonathan Robertson, sound design and composition; Kelly Vogel, costume designer, Curtis Smith, properties designer; Alex Murphy, stage manager; Drew Hafling, assistant director; Wyatt Wooden, assistant sound engineer; Art Kent, lighting; Kyle Dyck, technical director; Regina Weller, costumes; Rana Esfandiary, projection designer; Traci Terstriep Herber, choreographer. Musicians for the recorded music are: Ezgi Karakus, cello; Jonathan Schriock, violin; Jake Heinerikson, guitar; Caleb Fankhauser, drums.



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“The Mascot” continues at The Living Room Theatre from April 5 – 29. Tickets start at \$20 and are available by visiting www.TheMascotPlay.com or by calling 816.550.0748. The play contains some adult language for mature audiences.

Tags: The Living Room, “The Mascot”, Kansas City Theater, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment, Kansas City