

FEATURES

Vowell, Rakoff perform shrewd, biting comedy



MIRIAM BARLOW/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sarah Vowell (left) and David Rakoff (right), who both contribute to "This American Life," performed at UNCA in Lipinsky Auditorium Oct. 26. The well-publicized event almost filled the 700-seat auditorium.

for self effacement. Her descriptions of growing up in Montana and working in the service industry, while the rich made a playground of her mountain hamlet certainly resonated with me, as it probably did with many others in the audience.

Never ceasing to show the irony of a situation, Vowell reflects that the young woman working at the souvenir stand in Medora, N.D. is spending her time the way most Americans do, the way she herself has: working an unfulfilling, low-paying job they hate and making lots of money for someone else.

Vowell buys her nephew a Teddy Roosevelt teddy bear and says, "Here's your imperialist, capitalist, sweatshop-made stuffed animal, honey."

David Rakoff's association with fellow "This American Life" performer and North Carolina native, David Sedaris, is easy to see because of their kindred sense of humor. Rakoff took aim at some easy targets in the television industry, describing working on sitcoms and the kind of characters lurking in that pond.

Rakoff also described, with glaring precision, the perils of searching for enlightenment at costly spiritual retreats, an apt topic for Asheville. Rakoff's story about the "Omega Hug Compassion and Clarity" retreat, "taught" by Steven Segall, who he described as looking like Gloria Vanderbilt on cortisone, got an abundance of well deserved guffaws.

Both of these writers are worth checking out, as is the public radio show, "This American Life," to which they are both contributors.

Student exhibits include disturbing, intricate and bright, eye-pleasing art

Lynne Fox
Features Reporter

Three UNCA art majors, Eo Trueblood, Catalina Lina DiBiase and Celeste Howie, opened their senior exhibits last week.

Owen Hall's University Gallery features Trueblood's work. His sculptures generated feelings of gross disgust.

There were sculptures of skulls, mutilated body parts and a gothic horror that, taken at face value, were not something I wanted to stay around. Some of the images are stomach-turning.

That is exactly what they are supposed to be, and with this in mind, the exhibit must be considered successful. These pieces were not produced with the thought of selling them to customers for their living room. At least, I hope not.

With apologies to the artist, I couldn't help but wonder if he'd ever had a happy successful birthday party as a child. Where do these images come from?

It is very difficult to tour Trueblood's exhibit, and I tried to get out quickly. Nothing was appealing at first.

"Appealing" is not the right word for this room, but I made about four tours of the room before leaving. Revulsion from the content drove me away, but the skill of the artist held my attention.

The artistic talent became apparent after I viewed each piece closely. It was just the content that was disconcerting. Getting past the content to the deeper meaning allowed the viewer to appreciate the individual pieces.

On the second floor of the same building, DiBiase's paintings lined the walls. Her work was compelling

and more pleasing to look at. Her exhibit was a breath of fresh air compared to the Trueblood's work.

She used lots of Caribbean colors. The paintings are done in oils or acrylics on canvases of various sizes. Several of her paintings are as small as a sheet of paper.

Her abstract style, in even the smallest paintings, allows the viewer to take plenty of time to enjoy the images. Her paintings have more commercial value, meaning that more viewers could live with these images in their home.

They are soft on the eye and thought-provoking in content. There is a lot of texture added to her paintings, which grabs the interest of the viewer. This rough texture contrasts with the fluid lines of the painting. It seems to further highlight those lines.

Most of her work is untitled, but that seems to add to the content and pleasantness of the painting. If a title is necessary, the viewer can provide their own.

The third collection, in Ramsey Library's Blowers Gallery, displayed the paintings of Howie. Her collection is called, "Abstraction and Pop Culture."

The focus of her paintings is a combination of color and realism. The colors are primary and secondary, and the images are chopped into sections in the form of a collage. Her technical skill is evident in the detail of the pictures.

Commenting on her style, she said, "In my paintings, I want to break the images into displaced sections, like the organization of memories in the mind."

These displaced sections are, on their own, interesting features, but taking them as a whole are much more impressive.

All in all, each exhibit has merits which appeal to a variety of art appreciation styles.



JAMES PRITCHITT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A statue that was part of Eo Trueblood's exhibit, called, "Angst."

"This American Life" commentators come to UNCA

Sachie Godwin
Features Reporter

When I first heard that Sarah Vowell was coming to UNCA, I was so excited I put the flyer up in my house. I wanted to be sure I would not schedule anything else on the night of the event.

However, by the time Oct. 26 rolled around, I was so sick of seeing her face in that oh-so-glamour-shot pose with the word "shrewd" declared subtly in 46-point font underneath it, I thought I would spontaneously excrete from any and all available orifices.

Obviously, the public relations

people did their jobs well, though, because Lipinsky Auditorium was almost full, impressive for a 700-seat venue.

For those not familiar with the unique experience of hearing the self-proclaimed "least likely person to be a radio commentator," it must have been quite a shock. Vowell's voice is possibly the squeakiest and most nasal on the seven continents. She is a great storyteller once you get past the voice.

Vowell has the kind of arid wit that is usually reserved for hyper-intelligent teenagers, most performance artists and the British. She has written mostly autobiographical material, but there is always a strong attention to history in her

stories. Reading from a story about her life-long obsession for Teddy Roosevelt, Vowell mockingly describes gawking at buffalo with her sister on a vacation to North Dakota (to visit Theodore Roosevelt State Park, of course), and then, sitting down to a lunch of beefalo burgers.

I got the impression that nothing is sacred to Vowell, yet at the same time her reverence for Roosevelt is palpable. It seemed fueled by the notion that he is a tough geek, someone who read "Anna Karenina" on a cattle run.

Her humor is sharp and, at times, ruthless, but she is never afraid to put herself under the microscope

UNCA chorus, jazz band play Duke Ellington

Megan Fazekas
Features Reporter

"Celebrating the Duke" was a lively concert performed by the UNCA Community Chorus and the Jazz Lab Big Band Oct. 21 in Lipinsky Auditorium.

The show presented music by the famous composer, Duke Ellington. The concert highlighted many UNCA musicians and other members of the community, whose work and effort really paid off.

I enjoyed the show, especially the Duke Ellington selections that were jazzy and fun. Ellington's timeless music was appropriately selected for the show.

The UNCA Community Cho-

rus, directed by Chuck Taft, was the first group to perform. Members of the College for Seniors joined the chorus for the first three numbers. It was their first live show. Their presence made the chorus seem full and diverse.

The show started out slow, with a lethargic version of "America the Beautiful." The song was tedious and corny because the audience was asked to sing along. It felt like I was at church singing a hymn. The song seemed out of place for such an upbeat concert.

The second song was fun. I sat up in my seat as soon as I recognized one of my favorite songs, "Beginning to See the Light." The chorus became much more animated and lively.

Once the college for seniors exited

the stage the rest of the chorus became livelier.

Maybe it was due to the fact that there was more room on the stage, and I was able to check out all the singers.

During the rest of the selections, there were some impressive solos. I was glad to see UNCA students show off their talents.

There was a trio that sounded wonderful during one of the songs.

The range of voices from the chorus was diverse, but sometimes it leaned toward the high-pitched side. I watched the animated faces of the performers and secretly wished they would start dancing.

The performers looked happy, and I could tell they were into the songs. My other favorite songs were "Hit Me with a Hot Note and Watch

Me Bounce," by Don George and Ellington, and "Take the A-Train," by Billy Strayhorn.

The UNCA community chorus performed well. It seemed as though they put a lot of time and effort into preparing the show.

The music was carefully selected, and mixed fast, jazzy songs with slow, sexy songs.

The UNCA Jazz Lab Big Band performed after the intermission. The small ensemble, directed by Tim Haden, was phenomenal.

The most interesting part about their performance was that the director arranged all of the songs. This works to the band's advantage because Haden is able to feature certain instruments or cover parts that are not filled by the original arrangement.

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