

# Theater

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Review



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Theater review

## **bobrauschenbergamerica**

**Gorilla Tango Theatre Chicago.** By Charles Mee. Dir. Jack Tamburri. With ensemble cast.

Recently deceased pop artist Robert Rauschenberg's kitchen-sink style combines elements of abstract expressionism, surrealism and neo-dada to create a singularly expansive American idiom. Incorporating found objects and high-culture name-dropping into a vibrant jumble of imagery, its paramount sense of play finds a perfect match in the postmodern acrobatics of open-source trickster Charles Mee. The playwright's approach seems, for once, both fully justified and ennobled by its famous subject. And for this no-frills Fusion Theatre show, director Tamburri applies a firm hand; though he puts his agile, outstanding cast members through some crazy paces, they make it look far easier than it is.

Mee's frontal-assault deconstructions, especially his retellings of Greek classics, tend to grate; their real brilliance and generosity are all too often obscured by punk-rock swagger and look-at-me intellectual transgression. But they prove a uniquely appropriate lens for this oblique snapshot of what David Byrne's obit of the artist called the "simultaneously silly, profound and beautiful" work of a genre-straddling titan. Eschewing all but the barest of biographical elements, Mee's collagelike tribute juxtaposes chicken jokes with assassinations, home-cookin' bromides with senseless brutality; its emptily iconic characters weave through fragmented scenes that suggest both vision and visionary. The curt blazonry of Meredith Ries's costumes and design provide the finishing touch to a strong, often excellent production.



KISS MY SASS Rauschenberg gets deconstructed.

— *Brian Nemetusak*

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