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THEATER REVIEW | 'CARRIE'

## They Could Have Danced All Night, if They Hadn't Died

By ANITA GATES

Thirty years after we first saw that photograph of a blood-drenched Sissy Spacek in her prom dress, pretty much everyone knows how the movie "Carrie" ends. But the story's big prom-night finish has never been more fun than in the deliberately cheesy comedy version of "Carrie" at Performance Space 122. (Poor Miss Gardner, the phys ed teacher, done in by a silvery cardboard star!)

Clearly, Stephen King has a wonderfully warped sense of humor to have approved this new adaptation of his novel about a sweet but vengeful teenage misfit with telekinetic powers.

The show, written by Erik Jackson, opens with the silhouettes of three nubile teenage girls showering porn-actress style to the rhythm of the Foreigner hit "Hot Blooded." Neatly directed by Josh Rosenzweig, it remains playful to the end.



We are definitely in the 1970s. Keri Meoni plays the dumb blonde Norma Watson like Suzanne Somers's Chrissy in the sitcom "Three's Company." Kathy Searle, as Christine Hargensen, the original Mean Girl, is wearing Farrah Fawcett's hair (but brown).

Then there is Carrie.

Keith Levy (as his lovely alter ego, Sherry Vine) plays Carrie in likable absurdist style. At first she is barely capable of human speech. Then the character shifts into a new gear reminiscent of Michael McDonald's creepy little-boy character, Stuart, on "Mad TV."

Most of the performances are joyously on target, among them Danielle Skraastad as Miss Gardner, who ogles her female students and openly lusts after Tommy Ross, the big man on campus who is also a nice guy. (Omnisexuality was big in the '70s too.) Matthew Wilkas gives a fine low-key performance as Tommy, who tells Carrie that he hopes he doesn't "look too fruity" in his pastel tuxedo.

Absurdism is the order of the day. The items that Carrie moves with her mind include Tupperware and a bong. When the prom king and queen are named, they react silently, in slow motion. But much of the campy dialogue comes straight from the 1976 movie.

This "Carrie" has puppets, designed by Basil Twist and operated by Ceili Clemens. The best of them is the adorable pig that closes Act I with a horror-movie-style death scene, perfectly played.

"Carrie" is at Performance Space 122, 150 First Avenue, at Ninth Street, East Village, (212) 352-3101, through Dec. 30.