



chance encounters—between humans and humans, humans and animals, humans and fruits, humans and furniture—happen in Seattle. Each situation has its independent node of meaning, and each node is part of a network of activity—a mother, with her leashed son, visiting a zoo; passengers on a bus breaking into "My Girl"; a comic repetition of a family's dinner conversations. *Chairs* is funny and pleasing as a whole because it avoids profundity. Like Dawkins, Roberts stays on the surface of things—a happening is a happening. A bad version of this performance would have taken itself too seriously and tried to bring all the parts together into one mass of meaning. The mind behind *Chairs* knows that words, thoughts, and encounters in an urban space can only be precious if they are delicate, if they are precarious. CHARLES MUDEDE

The Declaration

Wing-It Productions at Historic University Theater

Through Sept 21.

Dressing up in powdered wigs and colonial coats is funny, but specifically spoofing the Second Continental Congress (the group that adopted the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1776 and ran the Revolutionary War) is hilarious—especially with an extra droll Speaker of the House (Nick Edwards) and a calmly bitchy John Hancock (Conor McNassar).

The bumbling Congress—with their drinking, vote swapping, and making out in the broom closet—takes up legislation based on suggestions from the audience who stand in for aggrieved colonists. The night I watched, Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Charles Thompson (the unknown secretary at the Congress) debated seat-belt laws, corsets, and baseball. In the second act, the cast picked an audience member to play King George and had to take up his punishing reactionary edicts from across the Atlantic, such as outlawing the words "such as," which made some great who's-on-first gymnastics.

Director Andrew McMasters has some highfalutin aspirations, explaining that the comedy is intended to show how Americans threw off tyranny in the past and that "we can make it happen in the future." While Bush sucks and all, the show stands on its own as a brainy send-up, like a student skit at Harvard or Yale circa 1927 when witty young history-club students would dial in something as (sad to say) arcane as tea jokes and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. JOSH FEIT

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