



The High of the "Tiger"

by Nick Dussault

Company One turns in an exceptional existential play about a ferocious feline's ghost/Rick Park roars in the title role/Mason Sand does a great Uday Hussein

You don't have to be an existentialist to appreciate the pondering of one's existence in Company One's superb production of "Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo. By the time the curtain falls, every living creature will have the chance to explore an even bigger question, "why aren't I gone?"

One by one, through a series of incidents that make socio-political commentary on the U.S. invasion of Iraq, each of the characters meet their untimely demise only to discover it's not the end.

The first one to go is the curmudgeonly Tiger, brilliantly played by local stage veteran Rick park. After impulsively biting the hand that feeds him, Park's delightfully perplexed Tiger discovers he's got "some serious reevaluating to do". While snarkily haunting his killer, the rumpled old tiger-cum-ghost struggles with the guilt, cruelty, freedom, and meaning of his own life.

Director Shawn LaCount finds a nice balance between the humor and the message of the story without veering into heavy-handed metaphors that could easily have turned the production into a morality debate.

Even at its heaviest moments, there's an underlying playfulness that almost makes you forget the weightiness of it all.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that Mason Sand portrays one of the most violent men in history, Uday Hussein, as an inept buffoon. Though Sand's utterly contemptible Hussein is so smarmy you might feel the need to bathe after the show, his unfortunately limited stage time is outrageously fun.

Ray Ramirez delivers a stellar turn as Tom, the guard in possession of Uday's gold pistol and toilet seat. Michael Knowlton is equally impressive as his dim-witted, trigger-happy partner.