

STAGE REVIEW

In Company One's 'The Interrobangers,' the truth is out there . . . in the woods

By [Don Aucoin](#) Globe Staff, Updated January 30, 2024, 3:41 p.m.



From left: Anderson Stinson III, Jupiter Lê, and Jay Connolly in Company One's "The Interrobangers." ERIN CROWLEY

The packed house at Company One Theatre's premiere of M Sloth Levine's "The Interrobangers" on Saturday night was more youthful and more diverse — and, for that matter, more enthusiastic — than you'll see or hear at performances by most other theater companies in the Boston area.

That kind of passionate engagement is a dividend of Company One's laser focus, since launching in 1998, on building and sustaining a bond with its audiences.


Its mission statement is a weighty one, spelled out in a program note by two of the founders, artistic director Shawn LaCount and associate artistic director Summer L. Williams, to forge "community at the intersection of art and social change in service to our vision of a Boston defined by justice, equity, and artistic innovation."

But the key to Company One's success is that it has pursued those goals with productions marked by a spirit of celebration and possibility, rather than eat-your-spinach didacticism.

Company One has consistently delivered a blend of dead-seriousness and vibrancy in productions of works like Inda Craig-Galván's ["Black Super Hero Magic Mama,"](#) Francisca Da Silveira's ["can i touch it?"](#) and Idris Goodwin's ["How We Got On."](#)

"The Interrobangers" is not of that caliber. But playwright Levine does have a good ear for dialogue, and certainly does not lack for imagination.

Levine attempts to fuse the tropes of the comic horror genre a la "Scooby Do" with a coming-of-age narrative built on an exploration of sexual identity, and with an added layer containing elements of the-truth-is-out-there alien-abduction mystery.



From left: Anderson Stinson III, Jenine Florence Jacinto, and Schanaya Barrows in Company One's "The Interrobangers." ERIN CROWLEY

But under the direction of Josh Glenn-Kayden at the Boston Public Library's Rabb Hall, "The Interrobangers" proves to be an unwieldy work whose moving parts don't quite cohere.

You're left with the feeling that both the play and the cast would be better served by a tight, 90-minute one-act structure rather than the current two-hour, two-act production. While there are several good individual performances, the cast of eight did not feel entirely in sync on Saturday night; the show's rhythms were choppy.

"The Interrobangers" is set in the fictional town of Foggy Bluffs in upstate New York, where a crime-solving quartet of high schoolers have reunited in a bid to get to the bottom of the story of the Foggy Bluffs Monster. A man has been found in the Greywoods Forest, torn to pieces. Who or what killed him? And what, exactly, happened years earlier to Zodiac (Anderson Stinson III), who went missing for a time?

The general belief is that he was kidnapped, but Zodiac insists he was abducted by aliens. Off he goes into the woods with friends Dani (Schanaya Barrows, adding to her string of impressive performances over the last couple of years), the high-achieving class president; Luna (Jenine Florence Jacinto), who is nonbinary and a no-nonsense truth teller; and Hank (Jay Connolly), a jock who may have hidden depths.

Then there's Hoover, an endearingly ready-for-action dog in puppet form, energetically manipulated by Jupiter Lê. Rounding out the cast are Chris Everett as Hank's mother and also Bettie, the proprietor of a thrift shop who claims to have seen the Foggy Bluffs Monster; Michael J. Blunt as Craig, the town sheriff; and Alex Jacobs as Mr. Dahl, a mysterious figure in sunglasses and gloves who keeps materializing out of nowhere.

Company One's design team brought its A game, including Danielle DeLaFuenta (sets), Elmer Martinez (lighting), E. Rosser (costumes), and especially Maria Servellon (projections).

Its flaws notwithstanding, the Company One production of "The Interbangers" serves as a reminder that theater is, or should be, a communal experience. When two of the play's characters kiss, having carefully tiptoed toward expressing their feelings for each other, the audience inside the BPL erupted in joy.

They seemed to feel they were seeing themselves onstage, or at least representations of some of the issues they grapple with. Given that certain lawmakers are hell-bent on making the lives of gay and trans youths as difficult as possible, that is no small thing. In an ugly time like the one we're living through now, "The Interrobangers" could even be seen as an act of protest.

THE INTERROBANGERS

Play by M Sloth Levine. Directed by Josh Glenn-Kayden. Presented by Company One

Theatre in partnership with the Boston Public Library and The Theater Offensive. At Rabb Hall, Boston Public Library, 700 Boylston St. Through Feb. 24. Free, with pay-what-you-want tickets. 617-292-7120, www.companyone.org

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