

Dream Ticket

By Ryan Bernstein; Directed by Kristin Skye Hoffmann

Produced by Alexander R. Donnelly and Fortress
Productions

[Part of the 2016 New York International Fringe Festival](#)

Off Off Broadway, Play

Runs through 8.25.16

VENUE #13: Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal Street

by Lexi Orphanos on 8.13.16



Chris Payseur and Amy Lee Pearsall in *Dream Ticket*.

BOTTOM LINE: *Dream Ticket* brings satirical Republican politics through Ryan Bernstein's highly focused Democratic lens to shed light on our corrupt love of candidacy drama, instead of where the focus should really be—on the American people.

In a theater full of people who are likely sick of hearing about politics, *Dream Ticket* provides a welcome outlet for our joined frustrations. Before the lights come up on a single desk flanked by two pristine American flags, a medley of sound bites pours through the speakers. Instead of playing iconic quotes from patriotic symbols, we hear the most mocked, disingenuous, and overall ridiculous quotes, most notably Megyn Kelly's "Santa is white!"

Dream Ticket revolves around the highly comical drama that is so innate to modern conservative politics. Playwright Ryan Bernstein, who recently worked on the Hillary Clinton campaign in Iowa and New York, interestingly enough chooses to show only two fictional Republican candidates as the stars of the show: hot-blooded atheist Leslie Sugarman (Chris Payseur), and uber-feminine Southern Christian Becky Roberts (Amy Lee Pearsall, who oozes with charm and wit). Sugarman is reflective of a Republican version of Bernie Sanders—raised Jewish, he's focused on the taxpayers, and his best friend and campaign manager is a lesbian. Even Sugarman's following is resonant of the many college students who proudly and defiantly "feel the Bern," here opting for a "spoonful of Sugar." Becky Roberts' side, on the other hand, is highlighted by Christian family values, mascara metaphors, and all things Bud Light, guns, and Springsteen.

However, the two Republican opponents share much more than a disagreeable political history, and go many miles to keep talk

of their past affair under wraps. The two play an excellent cat and mouse game throughout their debates and various interviews, which ultimately escalates to a literally furious make-out session. With both campaigns at a stalemate and sexual tensions running high, Roberts strikes an ultimatum with Sugarman—they should join forces to become conservative America’s “dream ticket.” But this dream quickly sours into a nightmare as their differing opinions and sexual manipulation warp their campaign in unimaginable ways.

One truly grounding moment happens when, amidst all the campaign chaos, Sugarman says, “if they just let us skip this whole campaign I could finally start cleaning up this mess.” As I looked around the theatre, I saw at least a dozen nods. In this way, *Dream Ticket* exemplifies a huge problem with American politics: we spend so much time and sickening amounts of money to bring down our opponents when we should be putting those same resources into lifting up the American people. Maybe this fact is obvious, but as the characters in *Dream Ticket* play fast and loose, fling insults, unearth rumors, and shame each other, it doesn’t feel too different from what plays on the news.

What I find most interesting is that in a room full of mostly liberal New York theatre-goers, the audience seems to feel for, and in certain cases, *root* for, the Republican. Bernstein—who also appears in the play as Ty Chadwick, a fratty Sugarman supporter—has no doubt carefully crafted Les Sugarman’s character to be a “new face” of Republicanism. He’s a single, Jewish-born atheist, he swears, he supports gay marriage, he denounces war, but he still clings to Republican economics. As a Democrat myself, it is comforting to see a fictional Republican

who veers away from traditional right-wing stereotypes and isn't glued to the Bible or a pile of money, guns, and white people. What I expected to be a night of satirizing the Republican party pleasantly turned into an exciting, thought-provoking glimpse into the changes *all* Americans can—and should—make in politics. (*Dream Ticket* plays at VENUE #13: Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal Street, through August 25, 2016. The running time is 1 hour 30 minutes. Performances are Fri 8/12 at 7:15; Sun 8/14 at Noon; Thu 8/18 at 2; Sun 8/21 at 7:30; and Thu 8/25 at 2:15. **There is no late seating at FringeNYC.** Tickets are \$18 and are available at fringenyc.org. For more information visit dreamticketforamerica.com.)

***Dream Ticket* is by Ryan Bernsten. Directed by Kristin Skye Hoffmann. Associate Directed by Marylynne Anderson-Cooper. Scenic and Lighting Design by Christina Tang. Costume Design by Laurel Livezey. Sound Design by Mark King. ACR is Max Rein. Production Stage Manager is Benjamin Andrew Vigil. Produced by Alexander R Donnelly, Fortress Productions, and Margaret Gandolfo. Assistant Produced by Kylie Mullins.**

The cast is Chris Payseur, Amy Lee Pearsall, Toni Martin, Adam Hyland, Olivia Jampol, Erik Gullberg, Desiree Staples, and Ryan Bernsten.