

Straws, Vegetables, Oompa Loompas, and Politicians



Big Little Laws—The 2018 Bar Show

Reviewed by Adam Sheppard

The 95th annual Bar Show was one for the ages. For the uninitiated, the irreverent musical comedy revue parodies local and national political, sports, and showbiz figures. The writers work through opening night to incorporate up-to-the-minute news stories. The show's title this year, "Big Little Laws," was a play on "Big Little Lies," the popular 2017 HBO show. The "plot" was a mystery—the opening musical number was "A Mystery" (parody of Something Rotten's "A Musical"). The show's script goes missing in the first scene and famed investigators (Holmes, Clouseau, Colombo,

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Briscoe, Jessica Fletcher, and Scooby Doo) and others hunt for the script.

President Trump got things started by singing of his summer fling with Supreme Leader Kim in "Summer Nights" (Grease). Trump was then Putin's (literal) puppet in a parody of Chicago's "We Both Reached for the Gun." In this version, "the end of our democracy has now begun, begun, begun, oh yes, the end has now begun, now begun." World leaders Merkel, Macron, May, and Trudeau lamented Trump's threat to pull out of NATO in "goodbye reliable NATO, NATO, NATO's being destroyed" (sung to Guys & Dolls' "The Oldest Established").

The comedy gods also granted cert. this year to poke fun at the Supreme Court. Justice Kavanaugh recounted his high-school years in a "teenage wasteland" (The Who). Justices Sotomayor and Kagan beseeched Justice Ginsburg to "Hold on" (parody of Wilson Phillips' song with the same title).

A diverse group of newly-elected congresswomen celebrated their victory in a pair of Gloria Estefan songs: "the Women

were gonna getcha" ("The Rhythm is Gonna Get You") and "Turned the House Around" ("Turn the Beat Around"). Republican Congresswoman Murkowski and Democratic Congresswomen Pelosi and Waters sang across the aisle in "The Middle" (pop song by Zedd, Maren Morris, Grey).

The tech sector made it into the fold this year. Alexa, the device (an actress dressed as an Alexa) sang to her operator that he made her feel "Like an Actual Woman" (parody of Carole King and Gerry Goffin's "Natural Woman"). Mark Zuckerberg testified in the Senate that Facebook is, in fact, "Getting to Know you, Getting to know all about you" (The King and I).

As for Chicago politicians, Bill Daley reminded his competition in the mayoral race of his distinct advantage: the public has "grown accustomed to our name" (ung to "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," My Fair Lady). The other mayoral candidates, however, implored the public: "Take a Chance on Me" (Mama Mia). In a show-stopper, Mayor Emanuel, donning a



Mama-Mia-esque, gold dance suit, bedazzled the crowd with Rahma Mia. That was one of several numbers that highlighted the terrific dancing and choreography this year. The other that comes to mind is “Rats”—actors in life-sized rat outfits scurried about the stage to the tune of “Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats” (Cats).

The Bar Show is audition-only, and lawyers completely comprise the cast. It’s obvious that these lawyers have musical-theatre training. In “Make Our Garden Grow” (Candide), the actors nailed the difficult operatic ballad (in this version, cannabis entrepreneurs were seeking a loan). In another vocally impressive number, Sarah Sanders remained defiant in “And I Am Telling You I’m Not Going” (Dreamgirls).

The sets too were notable this year. In Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory, Oompa Loompas who worked for Trump interacted with “The Candy Man” (Sean Hannity); Stormy Daniels sang of her “Golden Ticket”; and Michael Cohen admonished Stormy: “Hush, little lady, don’t say a word, Donald’s worried you’ll be a mockingbird.” In a parody of Wonka’s “Pure Imagination,” Trump governed with “pure intimidation.” Against a Wizard of Oz backdrop, Mike Pence, Lindsey Graham, and Susan Collins were “off to see

his twitter, the wonderful tweeter of ours.” Paul Ryan wondered what he could have been if he “only had a spine” (“If I only had a brain”). Melania longed for the days when she lived “Somewhere over Manhattan way up high” (“Over the Rainbow”). Ivanka acknowledged “complicit am I” (sung to “The Wizard and I”).

The show would not be complete without the Joe Stone/Fred Lane vaudeville straight-man/eccentric partner act—and as always, they delivered. Another scene that highlighted the cleverness of the show’s writers was a play on Abbot & Costello’s “Who’s on First.” In this version, the back-and-forth concerned which bands would perform first for a retro rock concert:

COLUMBO: Can you give me a little information about which groups are performing when?

HUGO: Sure

COLUMBO: Who’s on first

As for pop culture, the “Real Housewives of Cook County” premiered on Bravo. (Parody of “Beauty School Drop Out,” Grease). Roseann Barr self-reflected in “Oops I did it Again” (Britany Spears). Matt Lauer explained, “What I did for Love” (Chorus Line). In the Food Channel’s annual Vegetable of the Year show, avocado boasted, “I’m the thing in Guacamole” (“How Are Things in Glocca Mora,” Finian’s Rainbow); lettuce crooned, “The Lettuce Sits Tonight” (“The Lion Sleeps Tonight”); asparagus welcomed the “Age of Asparagus” (“Aquarius,” the Fifth Dimension); but “Kale is the Victor” (Michigan fight song).

In a series of short segments, Governor-elect J.B. Pritzker sang “Oh What a Beautiful Morning” (Oklahoma); Colin Kaepernick sang “I Want to Kneel in America” (West Side Story); a now-banned plastic straw parodied “You are My Lucky Star (Straw)” (Singing in the Rain); Omarosa sang her name to the tune of “Oklahoma”; Giuliani and Dershowitz lamented their fall from grace in “Maim” (parody of “Mame”); and Elizabeth Warren invited the public to “come see my DNA” (parody of “Cabaret”).

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The show closer, pre-encore, was the upbeat “Raise You Up/Just Be” (Kinky Boots). In this version, the cast exalted the Bar Show for “raising up” the cast, crew, and crowd.

As always, the show encored with the Bar Show original “Junior Partners,” the show’s pièce de résistance. Per tradition, the CBA President joins the cast on stage on opening night to sing a line. This year, CBA President Steven M. Elrod, a Bar Show enthusiast, cast member wanna-be, and one of the strongest and longest supporters of the show, took the stage for every one of the show’s four performances, and belted an entire verse (solo). Elrod (half-jokingly) declared to the audiences that the only way he was able to get to be on stage at the Bar Show was to be elected CBA President. President Elrod said this about the show: “After 40 years of attending the show, it is hard to believe, each year, that the show could keep getting better; but it does. This year’s show could have been the best ever, primarily because of the highly talented singers and dancers in the cast this year, and of course the incredibly creative and witty writers (all lawyers!)” ■