

This review appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer on January 25, 2018. Click below for the original review:

<http://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/arts/sensitive-guys-at-interact-satire-on-pc-rape-culture-gender-and-millennial-zeal-20180125.html>

'Sensitive Guys' at InterAct: Satire on PC, rape culture, gender, and millennial zeal

By Jim Rutter

Millennials have less sex than the previous three generations. The noted generational decline in testosterone could be one reason. Situations like the one MJ Kaufman presents in *Insensitive Guys*, playing through Feb. 11 at the InterAct Theatre Company, could definitely count as another. Kaufman's satire takes place on the campus of fictional Watson College, where student members of the women's Survivor Support Group and Men's Peer Education Group coordinate efforts to eradicate "all sexual assault in the next five years." The boys in the latter "work on their s—," meaning they self-censor, share feelings, and correct each other's behavior in an exercise reminiscent of the drinking game called I Never.

The women struggle to create a presentation that ensures future funding and increases membership. When Leslie (Maggie Johnson) joins, she reveals a troubling secret: Someone in the men's group has recently assaulted her.

A strong ensemble of five plays all parts, deftly maneuvering between gendered roles with the help of Katherine Fritz' costumes of Converse kicks and American Apparel skirts and tops. Some of the ensemble are of various gender denominations, and so the issues are further interrogated as actors who may be, say, cis-gender or perhaps nonbinary play both men and women. Bi Jean Ngo and Lexie Braverman excel in their roles, Ngo displaying touching sincerity as Pete, and Braverman showing how whiny boys that age can be. Emily Lynn (as Diana and Danny) gives the play its moments of angry-grrl feminism, and Brett Ashley Robison (as Tracy/Tyler) grounds the action with appropriate moral outrage.

Although presented as a "comedy about rape culture," Kaufman's work mostly spoofs earnest, overzealous attempts at correctness and satirizes the men that will co-opt any movement to virtue-signal and assert their identity (as *South Park* recently did with its character PC Principal). Much of the humor— and it abounds — is aimed at the infighting when young, eager millennials grapple with a problem that's persisted for millennia.

Evren Odcikin's direction enables the laughter, while building on (and exposing) Kaufman's better devices. This compelling new work powers through most of its 90 minutes as a mystery, with Kaufman cleverly dropping clues and filling in the story (such as exposition laced into a creative writing critique). **Though I had to sit up to full-throated laugh at regular intervals, I mostly perched at the edge of my seat in captivated enjoyment, still thinking about the ideas a day later** (if still disappointed by the abrupt ending).

This new work strikes a timely chord, not just in light of Harvey Weinstein and #MeToo, but also on the heels of the [University of Virginia rape controversy](#), the [Columbia University Mattress Girl fracas](#), and [California's 2014 "Yes Means Yes" law](#). For kids that enjoy maximum liberty and entitlement, biology burns like a forest fire, all-consuming and uncontrollable. Through humor, Kaufman has provided a non-threatening, stimulating way to examine how to move forward.