



Arts+Entertainment » Theater

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## Stage 62's *Avenue Q*

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By Ted Hoover



*Photo courtesy of Stage 62.*

Laura Barletta (in background) and Matt Augustyniak in Stage 62's *Avenue Q*.

The great news about Stage 62's *Avenue Q* is that I left the theater thinking, "I'm so old."

### **AVENUE Q**

continues through Sun., July 28.

Andrew Carnegie Free Library Music Hall,  
300 Beechwood Ave.

Carnegie.

\$15-18.

412-429-6262

or [stage62.com](http://stage62.com)

*Avenue Q* is the 2004 Best Musical Tony winner (with music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and a book by Jeff Whitty). In a nutshell, it's *Sesame Street* for grown-ups. Featuring a cast of actors and puppets, *Avenue Q* takes place in a run-down New York neighborhood that specializes in offering coping lessons for adult life.

Now usually I'm one of the youngest people in an audience, and *that's* depressing. My spring-chicken days are over: If I'm the youngest, where's the next generation of theater-goers?

But the Stage 62 audience was *packed* with twentysomethings, who were loving the production every bit as much as I did. It's thrilling to think that, having seen this show, they might consider seeing another piece of theater in the future.

And I hope it's just as terrific. Music director Erich Lasceki and orchestra bring huge energy to the bouncing, contemporary score. The entire design team has striven to create the perfect visual *Avenue Q* world, where an extraordinary cast get to astonish.

I don't see how Matt Augustyniak and Laura Barletta, playing the romantic lead puppets Princeton and Kate Monster, could have been bettered — singing, acting, *puppeteering*. Augustyniak and Barletta are superb performers.

Joey Frollo and Joey Moser, as "Bert and Ernie" doppelgangers, provide huge laughs, even when tripped up slightly by the performance space's weird acoustic properties. Natalie Hatcher sings with a powerful set of pipes. Sara Barbisch, Jessica Whittington and Rob James supply their own big laughs. And Becki Toth and Chad Elder are a hoot as the Bad Idea Bears, who have their own delightfully wicked party onstage.

I find myself singing his praises so often people are gonna think I'm on his payroll, but once again Stephan Santa raises the artistic level of Stage 62 several notches with his completely on-point and ruthlessly professional direction. He's the reason this show is the knock-out success that it is.

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