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Friday, October 27, 2006 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

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Theater Review

Comedy hits "Cyrano" right on the nose

By Leah B. Green
Special to The Seattle Times

The stock in trade of local Sex in Seattle (SiS) Productions, as the name suggests, has been the romantic comedy — specifically Asian-American romantic comedy, a genre SiS has serialized. The group has found a friend in Michael Golanco's "Cowboy versus Samurai," which it presents at the Richard Hugo House.



[enlarge](#) RICK WONG
Khanh Doan, left, and Ray Tagavilla star in "Cowboy versus Samurai."

Golanco's Korean-American hero, Travis Park, finds himself in Breakneck, Wyo., for the same reasons many people try small-town living — to get away from the city or escape a painful past. After the initial unpleasantness of townspeople making fun of him, Park makes a home for himself among the ranchers.

But this is a romance, and it doesn't take long for a complicating woman to arrive in town. Veronica Lee (Khanh Doan) is beautiful and intelligent and a Korean American with a professed preference for white men. So Park takes a cue from Cyrano de Bergerac and writes love letters to Veronica on behalf of his good (white) friend Del.

The web of sexual politics embedded in minority cultures is explored in depth through this triangular lens in a play that waffles between sweet romantic succor and impassioned politicized hair-pulling.

David Hsieh, filling in as Travis Park for the matinee performances, imbues the role with a kind, easy demeanor that easily suggests the perennial nice-guy and hapless romantic. (Ray Tagavilla plays Park in evening performances.) Travis Myers as Del is equally charming, right down to the rolling giggle he exudes when fumbling a line.

Theater review

"Cowboy versus Samurai," by Michael Golanco. Produced by SiS Productions. Runs Fridays and Saturdays through Nov. 18 at Richard Hugo House, 1634 11th Ave., Seattle; \$12 (206-323-9443).

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This nice-guy duo is countered by Jose Abaoag as Chester A. Arthur, the only other Asian American in Breakneck — a militant lost soul who, wearing a T-shirt airbrushed with Bruce Lee's image, provides much of the polemic fodder.

Alternately sweet and preachy, the play doesn't quite achieve synthesis between the two intentions. The chemistry between Travis and Veronica feels interrupted, rather than supported, by the cerebral discussions on racial politics. Still, the SiS crew, directed by Miko Premo, are a likable bunch who hit the humor in Golumco's script on the mark. Currently working on the 14th episode of "Sex in Seattle," these folks have learned a thing or two about romantic comedy, and it comes in handy here.

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