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Comedy troupe steps to the right — and the left — of politics

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COMEDY COLUMNIST

The political satire troupe Capitol Steps has been mocking the eccentricities of the nation's leaders for more than two decades, and it's safe to assume it'll never run out of material.

Some news cycles are more fertile than others, but judging by the Steps' current show, which begins a 13-day run at the Kravis Center on Tuesday, now is an especially ripe time for speaking — and singing — comic truth to power.

Because the Republicans are in charge, much of the show's recent run at the Broward Center was done at their expense. The Democrats were also rightfully ridiculed in a nearly two-hour show that should make swing voters out of all of us.

Drawing largely on material

from 2005's *Four More Years in the Bush Leagues*, a five-member cast and a pianist performed more than two dozen skits, including some taken from this month's headlines. Nearly all were accompanied by a musical parody, with such titles as *The Sunni Side of Tikrit*, *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Korea* and *I'm So Indicted*.

The Steps set a bipartisan tone by opening with warring duets between red state and blue state loyalists. Singing to *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, the red supporters were cast as Super Zealous Radicals Against All Things Atrocious, while the Blues were the Super Jealous Far Out Left Who Would Like to Run the Nation.

With the playing field leveled, the audience was introduced to the star of any Steps show — the

SHOW REVIEW

Capitol Steps

Reopens Tuesday, runs through Feb. 12 at the Kravis Center's Rinker Playhouse, 701 Okeechobee Blvd., West Palm Beach. Shows 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 1:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets \$35. Call 561-832-7469 or visit kravis.org.

president. As George W. Bush, Andy Clemence delivered one of the better impressions being performed in comedy circles. With his eyes squinting and his lips pursed in a befuddled half-sneer, Clemence captured Bush's patronizing tone and cowboy bravado while delivering lines like "uncertain times call for uncertain leadership."

Bush was joined by Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, nei-



BUSH LEAGUE: It's a sing-along as the Capitol Steps portray the Bushes — Laura, George W., George H.W. and Barbara. **File photo**

ther of whom came out looking any better. Rumsfeld, played by Jack Rowles in an Army helmet and dressed with six-shooters at his side, said of his boss, "The wheel is spinning, but the hamster's dead." Mike Loomis' Cheney livened up the show after intermission with a rap song about

Cher performing for the troops with her new sidekick, Sunni. Yes, Sunni and Cher.

The best send-up was a longer bit about the conservative takeover of PBS, which becomes GOP-BS for the Steps cast. The programming lineup includes "Master Race Theater," "Joe McCarthy: American Patriot" and a *Nova* episode about how trees cause all the forest fires. Bill Frist appears to declare Sleeping Beauty "fully conscious" in a dig at his Terri Schiavo diagnosis, while Ann Coulter trades barbs with Kermit the Frog.

There's much more, with hardly a dead spot in the program. Fast-paced and smartly written, the show is readily accessible to the 50 percent of Americans who take the time to vote in presidential elections.

tax cuts for the wealthy.

The female roles were played by Bari Biern, who donned a sweeping blond wig to sing *My Way* as Hillary Clinton, and Ann Schmitt, alternately mousy as a schoolteacher in explaining a color-coded avian flu alert system and wildly flamboyant as