

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Kristen Schaal Humors Crowd: Brian Miller Starts Show on Magical Note

By Katherine Finn and Alice Maggiore

Arts and Entertainment Editor and Managing Editor

On October 24, the quirky charms of Brian Miller, a student comedian and professional magician, and Kristen Schaal, a star in the HBO series "Flight of the Conchords," bewitched an audience at the Dewar Arena.

Both performers interacted with the crowd. While Miller's style was comfortable and conversational, Schaal relied on her energy, facial expressions and props to earn laughter. As the first act, Miller provided the perfect compliment to Schaal's headline.

"Some people get confused, 'cause it's all about the ends, but it's about the middles too!" Miller used these words to wrap up his opening magic trick, in which he fused three different-sized ropes—a small, medium and large rope—together, and proceeded to take what had become a cohesive circular piece of rope, back apart. The words also rang true to describe his half-hour act.

Miller, 21, and a Philosophy Major here at SUNY Oneonta, was entertaining. Ropes were not the only thing he fused together; his show juxtaposed the comedic with the magical. He did not laugh at the audience, but instead invited them to laugh with him—sometimes even at him, especially in drawing attention to his (unusually) thick eyebrows.

"It's easy to get distracted during my show because of my eyebrows ... the only reason I have long

hair is to take attention away from my eyebrows," Miller expressed, holding his hands up to invite a conversational tone.

Miller has practiced magic since he was five-years-old. He shared a brief anecdote with the audience where his five-year-old self ventured into a magic store and used "six months worth of allowance" to purchase a black bag. He re-enacted his encounter with the store's magician, pulling audience member Laurie on stage to join him, acting as his five-year-old self. Inviting Laurie to pull an egg out of thin air, he proceeded to make the egg disappear and reappear from the black bag.

Perhaps Miller's best joke of the evening involved baseball terminology that is often used to describe sexual encounters. Equating a "grand slam" to ultimately hooking up, Miller asked the audience why they'd want three guys to basically do the work for them, prior to sliding into home themselves.

His best "trick" of the night wasn't really a trick, so much as it was a comedic process. Though it was noticeably longer than his other routines, the audience did not get bored. The act kept them attentive; if they blinked, they would have missed something. Miller called upon another volunteer—Kelly, with a one dollar bill. After showing her a variety of prizes that she could select at the trick's completion—the options included a light up princess' magic wand that Miller

dubbed a magician's wand, one of those pens you'd find at the bank, with its wiring and all, tweezers, a Pez dispenser and a bottle of Advil—Miller burned a corner of the dollar to see if it "was real." Indeed it was; it disappeared. He instructed Kelly to pick up the Pez dispenser and peek inside, pausing for dramatic effect. When the dollar was not there, Miller ruled it would have been unbelievable anyway. Kelly looked to the Advil bottle and at Miller's urging, used the tweezers to pull out a dollar bill, with, you guessed it, a ripped corner.