



Kara Kesselring and James Finn Garner of "McCracken After Dark."

The right-wing Garner's thing

Stage Flight—part of an occasional series on local performers beyond music and theater stages.

Being right all the time is an immense burden. But someone has to do it, and that someone is Jack McCracken.

Tossing back bourbon and browbeating others with reactionary homilies, McCracken is becoming a familiar fixture at the Noble Fool Theater. In a one-man (and one-trophy-wife) show entitled "McCracken After Dark," this right-wing windbag invites viewers into his Georgetown townhouse for drink, song and impolite political discourse.

Chicago writer and performer James Finn Garner, who brings McCracken to life, says the show is a lounge version of "The O'Reilly Factor." "The poor guy can't be casual," says Garner, who wrote the bestseller "Politically Correct Bedtime Stories." "He has to have an opinion on everything and everything has to be very important. He tries to relax and let all voices be heard, but he can't because he's such a belligerent jerk."

Illinois Atty. Gen. Lisa Madigan, who recently saw the show, said there probably wasn't a single word coming from McCracken that she, as a Democrat, could support. At the same time, she says, "McCracken After Dark" is hilarious in a twisted way.

"Garner's McCracken is as funny as Rush Limbaugh," Madigan says. "Thankfully, Garner doesn't believe what he says."

McCracken's rantings are balanced by his fetching limousine-liberal wife Anita, played by pianist Kara Kesselring.

The McCrackens are more than a Washington power couple—they swing, and like any good cabaret act, break into song.

Annoyance Theater director Gary Ruderman says the show is enjoyable regardless of your political persuasion: "There are a lot of social commentary productions. But their satire focuses on the media. Throwing the swinging lounge scene in adds to the fun."

"McCracken After Dark," 9 p.m. Friday, Noble Fool Theater (cabaret stage), 16 W. Randolph St. \$5; 312-726-1156.

—Michael Bologna