

# Sarah Silverman / Charlie Demers

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By Alan Ranta Published Feb 26, 2017

Even though she never really had a ground-breaking starring role like Lucille Ball or Mary Tyler Moore — she's more so known for her myriad contributions to just about every funny TV show since the mid-'90s and stealing every scene in every film in which she appears — Sarah Silverman is one of the all-time greats. Few have a resume that remotely compares, and even fewer have produced a comedy special as surreal and provocative as 2005's *Jesus Is Magic*. She earned an Emmy nomination for her acting on the critically lauded *Sarah Silverman Program*, and won one for the writing on 2013's *We Are Miracles*. Her name belongs up there with Carol Burnett, Tracey Ullman and Gilda Radner in the comedy canon.

**Silverman is a hell of a political provocateur too, so it was great to see local activist, comedian, and regular performer on CBC's *The Debaters*, Charles Demers snag an opening slot for her set at the second annual JFL NorthWest festival. He performed his role perfectly. Demers brought the energy up as he respectfully hyped the headliner, then treaded through stories of losing the genetic lottery, dealing with a Nazi hypocrite, and the challenges of raising a mixed-race child.**

Unfortunately, Silverman wasn't exactly firing on all cylinders this evening, so she struggled to keep the momentum going. Reading from a few pages of notes on a stool, she was clearly testing out a lot of new material this evening. While she did her best to stay in the moment, to experience the now with us rather than being "empty vessels through which Facebook expresses itself," you could see and hear her working out her train of thought for much of the set. Granted, her standup frequently plays off of the awkward pause, often to underline that sense of is-she-seriousness as she broaches uncomfortable topics like rape and heavy periods, but in this set, it occasionally drifted over the line from intentionally awkward to merely awkward.

Silverman had to put a pin in a few bits, and cycled back after announcing she had arrived at her denouement to try out a couple of new gags. Much of her material clicked with the youthful, left-leaning crowd, from her feminist stance on Barbie's selective anatomy, the need for legislation around sperm, and her dad's unfortunate bathroom-based misunderstanding as a summer camp councillor, to cute facts about squirrels, the unbelievable reality of filming for television, and the unintended attestation of sexy spam, but the flow of the set was a tad like an open-mic, which, of course, she copped to in her unwaveringly honest, endearing way.

Ultimately, Silverman gave her godless crowd all they could clap to, all the religious insights, political provocations, and gross-out gags one would want. But as a performance, we'll have to reserve judgement until she has it all pinned down.

