

It's All in the Laughing

All in the Timing will have you in stitches.

All *In the Timing* has so much witty wordplay, double entendre, twists of tongue and incredibly funny dialogue, if you don't like one of the six one-act shows that make up this play by David Ives, another is bound to get you laughing.

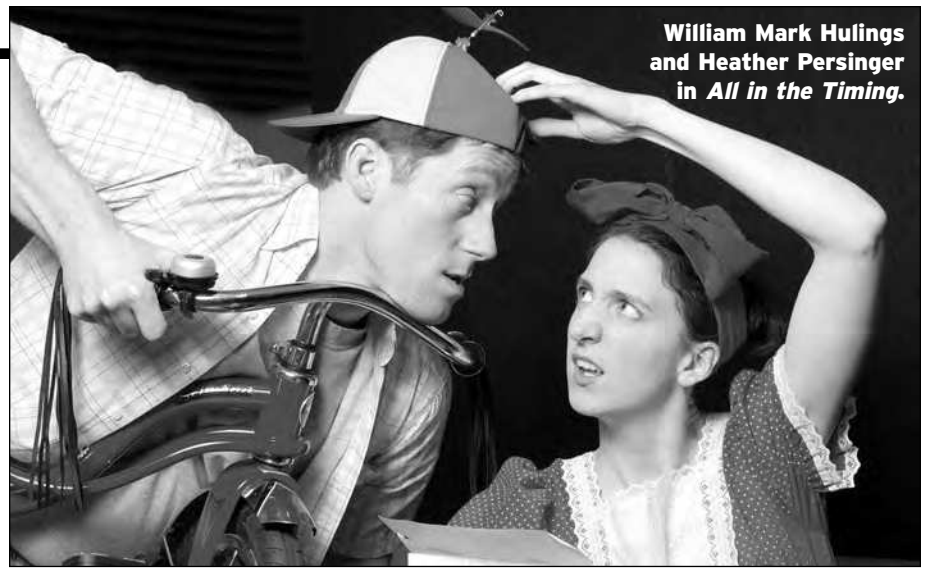
If you're a fan of classic literature, you'll probably love the first sketch, *Sure Thing*, and the third, *Words, Words, Words*. In *Sure Thing*, Betty, played marvelously by Heather Persinger, sits in a café on a Friday night reading a book. Bill (William Mark Hulings) saunters by and casually attempts to engage her in conversation. Between this beginning, in which Betty bluntly rebuffs him, and the end, in which they're practically making wedding plans, is a series of retakes. Every time one of them says or does something that would end the conversation or lead to that uncomfortable silence that tells you it's time to move on, a bell rings and they start afresh, changing the exchange just enough that things continue to move forward. Each retake starts from the point where the conversation was last rolling along smoothly.

Sometimes the bell rings after just a few words, sometimes after quite a few lines. Either way, Hulings and Persinger play off each other superbly, zinging the one-liners and imbuing everything from the friendly conversation to the verbal sparring with real-

ness you can feel. What's so appealing about *Sure Thing* is that Persinger and Hulings perfectly capture those moments we've all experienced: Uncomfortable silence, the moment when a conversation that was going so well plummets like a lead balloon, and best of all, the moments in which we recognize common ground with another person.

Why is *Words, Words, Words* so funny the laughter occasionally drowned out the actors? If you know classic literature, skip this next paragraph. But if you've never read the stuff, or it's been so long you don't remember a word, here's a refresher.

First of all, the characters are monkeys being used in an experiment to prove or disprove randomness, and are named after three famous writers: Swift (Jeff Pierce), Kafka (Persinger) and Milton (Hulings). They're kept captive in a large cage with typewriters to see if, randomly, they'll type up Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. They spend a lot of time typing gibberish, fighting and philosophizing, each one subtly representing the world outlook of his or her namesake. But at one point Milton reads what he's written: "Of Man's first disobedience and whose mortal taste brought death into the ..." — the first line of the real Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Then go from the prose of Milton to monkey Milton's next line, "blammagum, bedsocks, knockwurst, tinkerbelle."



William Mark Hulings and Heather Persinger in *All in the Timing*.

While not everyone in the crowd got that monkey Milton really was "writing" Milton, or the fact that in the end Kafka actually does start writing *Hamlet* (oh, the irony), the in-your-face digs at high-falutin' educational institutions are hard to miss. Kafka jokes about "publish or perish," while they ridicule the Columbia University pedigree of the scientist running the experiment.

The same four actors appear throughout the six acts, showcasing both their versatility and tremendous talent. As the scam-artist-turned-good-guy in *Universal Language*, Jeff Pierce once again proves his keen ability to deliver a message that transcends the actual words. As the other character, Dawn, Kimberly Bates captures the sweet naiveté and fragileness of her character stunningly. This play is a clever mishmash of sounds and words that create a completely understandable gibberish language, Unamunda,

which if you translated it would mean "One World." Read the "symbols" on the wall carefully, because it's no accident Ives put a message about trust as the backdrop to this heartwarming sketch.

The Philadelphia is also sidesplittingly funny, playing on stereotypes of different U.S. cities and the attitudes of the people who live in them. And the repetitions of sound and rhythm in *Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread*, and the way the same 20 or so words are used in varying order to convey different messages, is pure genius.

Hats off to director Kirk Boyd for producing one the best plays of the season. Run, don't walk, to get your ticket. Whatever you do, don't miss this one.

All in the Timing continues April 6-9 and 13-16. For more info log on to www.will-rep.org and for tickets call the Hult Center Box Office at 682-5000. **EW**

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