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## THEATER

Hope Springs Eternal in LCC's *Twelfth Night*

Overly hardened is the world when praise of pleasantness sounds like backhanded tedium. Pleasant, these days, is enough, and if the Immortal Bard's frolicsome romance *Twelfth Night* isn't pleasant enough, nothing is. Originally staged under the comelier title *What You Will*, this breezy comedy of mistaken identity is spring's hearty harbinger – warm, teasing, naughtily o'ersprung but supremely good-natured, containing nothing darker in conspiracy than two drunkards ensuring that their lady's uptight servant gets righteously punk'd.

Lane Community College's production of *Twelfth Night* is every bit the "feast of fun" director Judith Roberts wants it to be. Like a tragedy spun in reverse, it opens in chaos – a smartly staged shipwreck, all thundercrack and strobe darkness – and concludes in melodic bonhomie. Everything in-between is riotous jesting, besotted revelry and playful foreplay, as Viola (Sarah Glidden), washed ashore on Illyria and believing her twin brother Sebastian (Joseph Tanner Paul) to be drowned, disguises herself as a man in order to help Duke Orsino (Dane Olson) woo the aggrieved Lady Olivia (Talia Meade) ... meanwhile, the liquored-up sirs Belch (Joe Cronin) and Aguecheek (Sean Dugan) play an elaborate prank on Malvolio (Clay Johnson), convincing this stick-up-his-ass steward that his lady, Olivia, loves him dearly.

Sarah Glidden and Dane Olson in *Twelfth Night*

Roberts and her fine cast play it swift and sure, allowing the airy sophistication of Shakespeare's wordplay to cast its seductive spell. A small ensemble adds live music, and the mobile set is elegantly switcheroo'd between rapidly passing scenes (though LCC's productions remain far too brightly lit). As Roberts notes, this comedy "elevates" the role of the Fool, and she's found a most excellent Feste in Jonathan Edwards, a first-year student of tremendous talent: As Olivia's court jester, Edwards is by turns wry and ridiculous, and his conglomerate skills of musicianship, badinage and physical comedy drive this crackerjack production.

– Rick Levin

*Twelfth Night* plays through April 28 at LCC's Blue Door Theatre; [lanec.edu/tickets](http://lanec.edu/tickets)

## Everything's Coming Up Roses

Keeping in mind the immense amount of time it must take most small theaters to produce a seamless, well-crafted performance of Arthur Laurents' 1959 musical, *Gypsy* – with its countless costumes, 17 settings, monstrous cast and big-band charts – Cottage Theatre proves its ability to transcend the efforts of "most" small theaters by displaying their production with a lack of tack.

*Gypsy* is the tale of how Gypsy Rose Lee – the Queen of Burlesque – came to be. The first-act arc follows a slow trajectory, leaving many important plot-points for act two, though quite a few loose ends never actually get tied up. Quirks aside, though, the rather dry material is brought to life with a blend of fire and ice by co-directors Pamela Lehan-Siegel and Judy Smith and their cast.

Peg Major plays Mama Rose, the insufferable know-it-all mother of Gypsy Rose Lee, and she beautifully tiptoes the intended knife-edge between villain and sympathetic hero. By curtain fall you may end up thoroughly disliking the incessant push-and-shove pressure that Mama Rose places upon her daughters, and this is further testament to Major's portrayal of the dynamic main character.

Although this musical has the potential to resemble a racy skin flick, Cottage pulls it off tastefully, though with enough bawdy dialogue and revealing costume design to keep it believable (and comical: praise goes to Miriam Major for her portrayal of the riotous Mazeppa). Without the swoon of Jule Styne's original music (here directed by David Larsen), the production might lose its edge. Instead, the sexy, swinging jazz tunes are brought to life with gusto by a live band.

Much of *Gypsy*'s appeal comes with the slow transition from the charm of family life to brooding spirals of negative emotion, despite nothing much changing other than the girls growing up. In many ways it's a story of letting go, but this production seizes the opportunity and pulls it off respectfully.

Cottage Theatre's production of *Gypsy* runs through May 6; tickets & info at [cottage theatre.org](http://cottage theatre.org) – Andy Valentine

Peg Major as Mama Rose in *Gypsy*

## God is a Fish

Lord Leebrick Theatre is once again encouraging aspiring writers to get their scribble on with Northwest Ten, a festival of 10-minute plays. This year's theme, *Writing On The Wall*, implies broken rules and unexpected insights. Among the truths revealed this time around: God is a fish, frat boys make really creepy trees and pink glitter brings out the blood splatters in a protest sign.

Ari Chadwick-Saund garners laughs with *Picketing for Pros*, where Jorah LaFleur plays an enthusiastic protester to Darlene Morton's serenely religious anti-abortionist, and enough quirky twists exist to make light of the play's serious setting. Mary Gen Fjelstad's *Inner Tube* examines the pain and promise of a divine calling – even if the calling is to be an inner tube.

The standout play of the evening is *Lunker* by Kato Buss. This modern fishing-aficionado take on the disturbing biblical story of Abraham and Isaac features a nice mix of music and projections, and is solidly played out by an able cast.

In any festival of 10-minute plays, there are bound to be vignettes that fall flat for one audience member or another. There are themes I don't care for in some productions, and a touch of laissez-faire casting in others. But any play I'm not crazy about only lasts ten minutes, and it all leaves audiences with ample topics to discuss over their post-show drinks. – Anna Grace

Northwest Ten: *Writing On The Wall* runs at Lord Leebrick theater through April 22; dates, times & further info at [lordleebbrick.com](http://lordleebbrick.com)