



ANDREW NGUYEN AS 'FESTE'

THE BRAND NEW BARD

University Theatre sets the sonnets on stage with *Love.Will.Shake*.

'Grief is the price we pay for love," an actress concludes, and I can almost see the words as they drift from the somber stage. You can hear the assembled audience of college students nodding their heads in solidarity with the characters. Grief, love, sex and gross over-dramatization are hallmarks of many people's freshman year at university and of Shakespeare's sonnets.

UO theatre professor/director John Schmor leads his cast in an experimental journey to dramatize William Shakespeare's sonnets. According to his director's notes, it's an idea that had been haunting him for some time. When a space in UT's fall line up opened, Schmor knocked out a skeletal rough draft in two weeks, then spent the rehearsal period rewriting and refining *Love.Will.Shake*. with the help of his cast.

And that's just cool.

How does it work? The sonnets are lovely, but you can

find that even among the most die-hard Bard-o-philes, many have only a passing acquaintance with them. The play then seeks to educate as well as entertain, and it is obvious that it is born out of love and scholarship.

There is a lot going on. Shakespeare is portrayed by two people, William M (Andrew Krivoshein) and William W (Olivia Walton.) In extraordinary costumes that are part dress, part pumpkin pant, William M has a larger role as the lover of both a beautiful young man (Evan Marshall as W.H.) and a dark lady (Tatianna Young) who has, remarkably, come to London from Africa to study shipbuilding and navigation. William W spends a lot of time laughing at her male counterpart, while having an affair with a female Hamlet (Brianna Kirschner).

But that's just the primary plot. There are innumerable other plot-lets, and many of your favorite characters, like Helena (Shannon McInally) and Hotspur (Nathan Urbach) rolling through the show. Stealing the limelight are Rebecca Nachison and Steve Wehmeier as a feisty Queen

Elizabeth and King James. Presiding over all the chaos of love and angst is Andrew Nguyen, a Feste in hipster glasses with a ukulele. It's wild.

There were moments in this energetic, emotive show where I was reminded of last fall's *Batboy*, such as an impromptu orgy, this one featuring boots and shoes rather than fantastical creatures, and "willful cross-dressing." There were other times I was reminded of *Shakespeare in Love*, as we see William M working on scenes for *Romeo and Juliet*, only this time Juliet is played by a man.

Ultimately Schmor is an entertainer: he knows the value of a well-timed joke and breathtaking visuals. The design crew at the UO turns out remarkable costumes by Alexandra Bonds and truly beautiful lighting design by Janet Rose.

Lusting, sighing, laughing, fighting; the cast of *Love. Will. Shake*. bare it all with heart in this unique production, calling us to give ourselves over to the glories and grief of love. ■

Love.Will.Shake runs at the Robinson Theatre Nov. 2-17.

The Actor's Table of Eugene explores 'faith' through readings

The Actors' Table of Eugene (TATE) will flood Tsunami Books once more with *Leaps of Faith*. It's an evening of the trials and triumphs of trust, whether in ourselves or the divine.

TATE is on fire, as literally every theater person I ran into this month was planning a reading. Founder Judy McKenzie has expanded her production team, enlisting the help of Emily Hart and Carol Massahos.

The Actors' Table is an evening of readings from the favorite scenes of local theater artists, so the fare will run from classic to contemporary, and all of it will be deeply personal. Greg Foote and Carol Denis will be reading from their own work.

I checked in with Paul Calandrino, who will be performing the Raymond Carver poem "You Don't Know What Love Is (an evening with Charles Bukowski)."

It's an evening of the trials and triumphs of trust, whether in ourselves or the divine

"When the producers first announced the theme of the show as 'faith' I thought that might rule me out because I'm not a person of faith," Calandrino says, explaining his inspiration. Then he hit on the perfect idea. "I thought of the Carver poem, which I've loved for years ... It's about that secular faith of my generation, love. He's 51 years old, he says, and he's in love with this 25-year-old 'broad.' It's a huge leap of faith for the dissolute poet,

famous for a long string of disastrous love affairs. I find the poem to be hilarious, grotesque and moving, just like Bukowski and Carver themselves."

Hilarious, grotesque and moving sounds like good theater to me, and this is just one of the many pieces to be read at TATE. Seating is tight so show up early. Suggested donation is \$5-\$10. Pay it if you got it, and if not, come anyway. ■

TATE runs one night only, 8 pm Saturday, Nov. 17, at Tsunami Books.