

JOE CRONIN AND TOM WILSON IN JUDITH ROBERTS'
THE WALK, DIRECTED BY REBECCA NACHISON

FAST DRAMA

Northwest Ten delivers spontaneity and vigor at OCT

A soul stolen by a photograph, a tree-worshipping Christian camper and five wildly different folks stuck in a box: It can only be the Northwest Festival of Ten-Minute Plays, the fascinating evening that feels like flipping up rocks and seeing a pulsating world beneath, then moving to the next. NW10 encompasses all the grand excitement of sharing art without any of the pretension.

Northwest Ten Goes to Washington! is decidedly stronger than previous festival installments. Oregon Contemporary Theatre's beautiful space, professional lighting and sound certainly help. In past years there were always a few plays that seemed to be rehearsed slapdash in someone's living room, but this year's festival was completely free of amateurism. The direction is strong and the acting purposeful. Also elevating this production are excellent live musicians Rachel Young and Kyle Everett.

The title *Northwest Ten Goes to Washington!* is a nod to the move of opening up submissions to hopefuls in the state of Washington, but that didn't have a strong impact. New York playwright Kyle Bass did the blind judging and in his selection of eight plays only one came from outside Oregon.

The Black Box, by Russell Dyball, captures five people stuck in

a room forever, creating an "existential Village People." Darlene Rhoden's *Bread Crumb Love* brings down the house with a hilarious and all-too-true detailing of the love lives of modern women. Judith Roberts creates an intense, absurd piece with *The Walk*, illustrating one of the festival's greatest strengths: unabashed experimentation.

As always with NW10, by intermission you hear audience members buzzing about their own intention to craft a short play. It's inescapable: a person leaves the theater and begins to see ordinary 10-minute interactions elevated to theater and is gripped with a desire to translate them onto the stage. Fortunately, NW10 can respond to this need, offering a half-day playwriting workshop, "Writing the Perfect Ten," taught April 12 at OCT by NW10 co-producers Connie Bennett and Paul Calandrino.

And for those who don't aspire to authorship, NW10 offers another kind of inspiration. These brilliant, brief snapshots examine our own world for beauty and meaning. If all the world's a stage, it is filled with myriad moments ranging from absurd to ethereal, making each of our lives a festival. — Anna Grace

Northwest Ten Goes to Washington! runs through April 12 at Oregon Contemporary Theatre. For more workshop information, visit octheatre.org.

A FAITHFUL FIDDLER

Cottage Theater stays true to Fiddler on the Roof and sells out shows

Since its debut in 1964, *Fiddler on the Roof* has held a certain special status among Broadway shows. It is the Beastie Boys of musicals — beloved, offbeat, wise and wiseacre-ish, slapstick hip. More times than I can count, the mere mention of *Fiddler* has caused a friend to break out in baritone: "If I were a rich man, yubby dibby dibby dibby dum..."

Despite being set in a besieged shtetl in 1905 Tsarist Russia — where the growing expulsion of Jews hints at a century of increasingly vicious and widespread anti-semitism — this tale about Tevye and his daughters is buoyed by a hard-won sense of loving happiness and joy in life. This joy derives, in part, from the tension struck between Jewish tradition and the advent of a very modern chaos. *Fiddler*, even against its fairly downbeat ending, just makes people happy. And Cottage Theatre's current production, under the able direction of Peg Major, fully taps into the uplifting survivalist spirit of this classic. The show is a happy success.

At the center of *Fiddler* is the milkman Tevye, and Cottage pulls a minor coup here in casting Paul von Rotz for the role; he plays the robust paterfamilias perfectly, as equal parts happy-go-

lucky King Lear and charming kvetch, a good man who rolls, sometimes haplessly, with the punches. Surrounding von Rotz is an enormous cast, and the fine performances among this ensemble of actors, ranging in age from infancy to respectable maturity, are too numerous here to mention. Let it be said that the entire cast, appropriately squeezed onto Alan Beck's elegant sets, achieves a kind of kinetic energy, turning the Jewish ghetto into a gorgeously ramshackle theater of grand passions. A live orchestra, conducted by Larry Kenton, further provides a snap of immediacy. The music is spot-on.

For a community theater to mount such a hefty production, and to do it with such aplomb and fidelity to the spirit of the musical, is a rare treat. Sure, there are small glitches (if not everyone can do an Eastern European accent, perhaps none should), but this in no way detracts from the collective atmosphere achieved — an infectious atmosphere that finds just the right balance between the bittersweet and the hopeful. It would be difficult to encounter this *Fiddler* and not feel just a little biddy biddy better about life in general. — Rick Levin

Fiddler on the Roof runs through April 27; however, the remaining performances are sold out.

A Mid-Summer Night's Dream

by the Bard!

> directed by <
Sparky Roberts

Ragozzino
Hall
LCC
Main Campus

April 18-19,
24-25
7:30pm
April 26 2pm

Tix \$10 GA/\$5 s/s
lanecc.edu/tickets
or at the door!

