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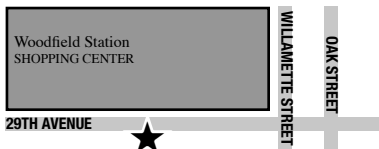
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THEATER BY RICK LEVIN



JENNY PARKS (LEFT), JOEL IBANEZ, DONOVAN SEITZINGER AND HILLARY HUMPHREYS IN ACE'S *FALLING FOR EVE*

## APPLES TO APPLES

ACE's offbeat musical comedy *Falling for Eve* looks at the pitfalls of relationships in the Garden of Eden

Ah, Paradise: What an orchard of happiness. Endless green, endless time and endless innocence, unsullied by death and the knowledge of it. What's not to like? But God, in his infinite wisdom, looked upon Eden's immaculate expanse and thought unto himself: Needs something. Needs a beholder to appreciate my handiwork and artistry, my Godness. Needs people.

And so there were people, and everything went to hell.

This, then, is the jumping off point of *Falling for Eve*, an odd and mildly offbeat musical now playing at Actors Cabaret of Eugene under the direction of ACE's Joe Zingo. Written by Joe DiPietro and with music and lyrics by Bret Simmons and David Howard, *Falling for Eve* turns the biblical fable of Adam and Eve into a sort of situational comedy about the pitfalls of romantic entanglements.

Great liberties are taken with scripture here, leading to a story that is less about temptation and evil than a meditation on the downfalls of intimacy and emotional growth. When Eve (Jenny Parks) takes a hit off the proverbial apple, she basically leaves Adam (Joel Ibanez) in the dust, stuck in the Garden of Eden while his girl, ejected and dejected, wanders out into the big, bad world. Rather than pleasing God, Adam's obedience frustrates the creator, who is anxious for the human race to get underway with sex and procreation (and sin and death and all that jazz).

The fate of these first Earth people, and therefore all humanity, is watched over not only by God—in his male (Donovan Seitzinger) and female (Hillary Humphreys) incarnations—but by a pair of angels as well, Sarah (Emily Westlund) and Michael (Sheldon Hall). Together these extraterrestrials form a sort of slapstick chorus, less supreme beings than a quartet of fallible Greek gods wringing their hands over the vagaries of hominid free will.

*Falling for Eve* moves swiftly, jumping from funny musical numbers ("Apple, Apple, Apple, Apple") to haunting solos such as Eve's lost-in-the-wilderness ballad "Just Beyond Where the World Ends." The cast is strong and Zingo's direction is sure and swift. For a story that riffs on something as broad as the Christian creation myth, the musical is over before you know it.

It's all a pleasant and entertaining diversion, though occasionally the musical feels slight and half-baked, a problem that has less to do with the production than the writing itself. At times, it seems as though *Falling for Eve* can't decide whether it wants to be a wacky rom-com, a comedy of manners or a holy farce—a problem in tone that scatters the story and seems to leave a lot off the table. A venal sin, perhaps, but consternating nonetheless.

Thankfully, what is on the table, including a totally captivating performance by Parks as "The First Girl" and Mother of All Creation, makes this show worthwhile. ■

*Falling for Eve* plays at Actors Cabaret of Eugene through April 16; info and tickets at [actorscabaret.org](http://actorscabaret.org) or 683-4368.

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