

THEATER NOTES



KATHLEEN MORROW and David Dye dance in "Leading Ladies" at Big Britches in Bingen.



'VAGINA MONOLOGUES' actors Cynthia Yoshida, left, and Julie Hatfield portray Afghan women in one segment.

Photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea

Five new local stage productions on the horizon

The Gorge theater scene burgeons again in the next few weeks after the holiday hiatus. A total of five productions open in Bingen, Hood River and Odell starting Jan. 31.

First up are "The Vagina Monologues" at Columbia Center for the Arts and "Leading Ladies" at Bingen Theater.

'Leading Ladies' Comes to the Gorge

Bruce Ludwig directs a comedy by Ken Ludwig (no relation), the author of "Lend Me A Tenor" and "Moon Over Buffalo." It is the first show for Big Britches 2020 season, once again at the Bingen Theater. The 10-performance run begins Feb. 7.

The story revolves around two English Shakespearean actors, Leo and Jack, played by Joe Garoutte and Jacob Camp, who find themselves so down

on their luck that they are performing "Scenes from Shakespeare" on the Moose Lodge circuit in the Amish country of Pennsylvania. When they hear that an old lady in York, Penn. (Kathleen Morrow), is about to die and leave her fortune to her two long lost English nephews, they resolve to pass themselves off as her beloved relatives and get the cash. The trouble is, when they get to York, they find out that the relatives aren't nephews, but nieces.

Romantic entanglements abound, especially when Leo falls head-over-petticoat in love with the old lady's vivacious niece, Meg (April Sampson), who's engaged to the local minister (David Dye). Meg knows that there's a wide world out there, but it's not until she meets "Maxine and Stephanie" that she finally gets a taste of it. Tom Burns, Amber Sheaves, and Texx Spe-

zia-Shwiff round out the cast.

In addition to last season's "The Odd Couple: Female Version" and "The Foreigner," Bruce Ludwig also directed "Chicago" for the Columbia Gorge Orchestra Association and "The Full Monty" for CAST.

Ludwig said, "Men dressing as women for nefarious purposes is somehow always funny."

'The Vagina Monologues' returns Jan. 31

The Eve Ensler play has been described recently as "still urgent, particularly in light of the current #MeToo and Time's Up movements" (Sarah Savitt, The New Yorker) and, since its original release, as "probably the most important piece of political theater of the last decade" (Charles Isherwood, New York Times).

"The show brings talent, breadth of experience and beautiful generosity for the future of women everywhere," said director Judie Hanel. Thrive Hood River is partnering with CAST and Hanel for an evening of comedy, moments of tragedy, and a sense of female solidarity.

The opening night "Little Black Dress Cocktail Party Show" ticket includes a glass of wine, heavy appetizers, and VIP seating.

"The Vagina Monologues" features monologues by nine local actors, is a fictional series of accounts based on more than 200 interviews Ensler conducted with women of different races and ages about their relationship with their bodies.

The monologues range from the comic to the horrific; content is suitable for mature teens.

This will be Hanel's third production of "The Vagina Monologues" in the past 15 years. Some of the segments are new and updated from previous productions, according to Hanel.

Shows opening soon:

- "Radium Girls" — Opens

- Feb. 28, Hood River Valley High School
- "West Side Story" — Opens March 6, Wy'east Middle School Performing Arts Center, Columbia Gorge Orchestra Association
- "Charlotte's Web" — March 13, Columbia Center for the Arts Children's Theater

TICKETS AND TIMES

"The Vagina Monologues"

Jan. 31 — Ladies Only performance (see story)
 Feb. 1 and Feb. 7-8, 7:30 p.m., and Feb. 2 and Feb. 9 matinees at 2 p.m.
 Columbia Center for the Arts, 215 Cascade Ave.
 Details at columbiaarts.org/events/vagmono; tickets at Wauycoma Bookstore and the CCA gallery, 215 Cascade Ave.

"Leading Ladies"

Feb. 7-8, Feb. 13-15, and Feb. 20-22 at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 9 and Feb. 16 at 2 p.m.
 Bingen Theater, 210 Oak St., Bingen
 Advance tickets available at www.bigbritches.org.
 Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$12 for students.

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