

Class Act Theatre serves up 'Greater Tuna' on wry

"Greater Tuna"

Review
BY BURNEY GARELICK

Class Act Theatre (CAT) caught the big one, and when it comes to outright prolonged laughter, it doesn't get bigger than "Greater Tuna," a crackling comedy bursting with belly laughs to tickle your funny bone from now until Christmas.

"Greater Tuna" fills the CAT stage with a cast of thousands chattering and tweeting almost simultaneously like social media run amok, a fishy fancy feast.

Tuna is the third smallest town deep in the heart of Texas. The Lone Star State is known for its tall tales, and in "Greater Tuna," 20 of its residents tell tales in a hilarious sendup of small-town life — or life anywhere — including the pitfalls, perils and proclivities of getting from day to day. It's a little like Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," but wilder and with a

touch of felony and mayhem.

Pay attention, because what happens in Tuna stays in Tuna.

Written by Ed Howard, Joe Sears and Jaston Williams, "Greater Tuna" opened on Broadway in 1982 and continues to tour major theaters throughout the country and abroad, becoming one of the most produced shows in American theater history.

Even though the show was first staged in the 1980s, the jokes are still funny, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to capture their relevance to 2017.

But CAT is an intimate theater, and even 20 actors on its stage might cause the boards to creak. Not to worry. "Greater Tuna's" 20 characters are all performed by only two actors.

It's an act of prestidigitation equal to the amazing Popovich's feat of animal magic. "Greater Tuna" contains no covorting canines, felicitous felines or rabbits in or out of hats or holes, but there's no doubt magic is afoot — a fleet foot to keep up with a myriad of costume changes on this theatrical speedway.

CAT's two magicians are Linda Sherwood and David Lauria. Sherwood is a longtime local trouper returning to the stage after a long hiatus, and Lauria is co-owner of CAT and no stranger to theater stages as both actor and director. The actors affect a Texas twang, with different inflections for different characters.

Genders are changed like trousers and frocks. Sherwood's mustaches have lives of their own, as do Lauria's wigs, and his ladies could well be forebearers of Fanny Ruggburn!

As Shakespeare said, a man (or woman) in his (or her) time plays many parts. Lauria plays Thurston Wheelis, Elmer Watkins, Bertha Bumiller, Yippy the dog, Leonard Childers, Pearl Burras, R.R. Snavelly, Reverend Spikes, Sheriff Givens and Hank Bumiller.

Sherwood plays Arles Struvie, Didi Snavelly, Harold Dean Lattimer, Petey Fisk, Jody Bumiller, Stanley Bumiller, Charlene Bumiller, Chad Hartford, Phinas Blye and Vera Carp.

That's the scorecard, but rather than get tangled in the name tags, sit back and relax, suspend your disbelief and let the good times roll like tangy

sauce over Texas's funniest barbecue. With all the commotion, props are minimal to set the scenes — a long table and chairs on one side with a mostly on "On Air" sign above, a kitchen table and chairs on the other, an old-fashioned radio in the center in front of a painted panel depicting dry brown Texas hills and a bright blue sky.

The panel covers the portal for entrances and exits.

The incidental recorded music is perfect, including country classics by the likes of Patsy Cline, Ernest Tubbs and Hank Williams, with songs favored by Florence's Buck & A Quarter Band.

The sun also rises on Greater Tuna's radio station OKKK and its laid back shock jocks, Thurston and Arles, who announce the news of the day.

There's no peace in the Middle East, but Judge Buckner died of a stroke and was found in a 1951 Dale Evans one-piece swimsuit. The Smut Snatchers of the New World will meet today. The on-again, off-again auditions for "My Fair Lady" are on again; the director finally located some scenery previously used for "South Pacific."

That's just the beginning. You'll soon meet Bertha Bumiller, beleaguered mother

and member of Tuna's committee to destroy pornographic books in the high school library; Petey Fisk of the Greater Tuna Humane Society; nefarious Aunt Pearl Burras; and Rev. Spikes, whose eulogy is a litany of clichés.

Finally, the sun sets and the radio team signs off. That's all the news from Greater Tuna, where the women are tough, the men are marginal, and all the children are outrageous.

With that, we give a big Texas toast to the actors, director Rosemary Lauria (CAT's other half), and the amazing pit crew, always on point and in time in the hurly burly hilarity.

R.R. Snavelly notwithstanding, Texas is known for its mighty fine fiddlers who often compete against one another. At old-time fiddle contests, a competitor is asked to play a hoedown, a waltz and a tune of his choice.

Let "Greater Tuna" be your tuna fish choice at Class Act Theater this weekend and next.

Class Act Theatre is located at the corner of Kingwood Street and Rhododendron Drive.

"Greater Tuna" plays Oct. 20, 21, and 23, and Oct. 27, 28, 29.

For information, call the box office at 541-991-3773.

Annual Empty Bowls set for Dec. 1-3

The dates for Florence Food Share's 8th annual Empty Bowls fundraiser will be Friday, Dec. 1, from 5 to 7 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 3, from noon to 3 p.m.

The event will be held at the

Florence Events Center.

There will be beautiful handmade ceramic, wooden and glass bowls for sale donated from local artists, as well as one-of-a-kind wooden artwork (sushi boards, coasters, trivets and more) from local artist Rhonda Butler.

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Property tax statements now available online

Lane County taxpayers will receive their 2017-18 property tax statements beginning on Monday, Oct. 23.

Statements are available online now, as well as information about the county value trends, levy changes, and individual property tax account information, at www.lane-county.org/AT.

The first payment is due on Wednesday, Nov. 15.

Lane County Assessment and Taxation collects property tax on behalf of 83 separate taxing districts, including cities, schools, education service districts, water districts, rural fire districts, urban renewal districts and other taxing districts, such as park and

recreation, library and ambulance districts.

The total property tax certified for all tax levies combined in 2017-18 is \$515.8 million.

This is approximately 4.1 percent more than in 2016.

The total amount of taxes billed changes each year as a result of the addition of new or renewed local option and bond levies, the expiration of local option and bond levies, the 3 percent statutory increase in Maximum Assessed Values (MAV), the addition of new properties to the tax roll, the number of exemptions granted and the number of properties being taxed on their lower market values instead of their Measure 50 MAV.



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