

GOING OUT » LIVE THEATRE

OPENING

TWELFTH NIGHT

The 19th season of Bard on the Beach launches with one of Shakespeare's freshest comedies, a tale of mistaken identity, cross-dressing and hopeless love. Director David Mackay places the action in his highly stylized vision of the 1920s. Lois Anderson (always a gem) plays the lost but lovely Viola. To Sept. 27. \$18 to \$33. Under the tents in Vanier Park, 604-739-0559.

MAGNETIC NORTH THEATRE FESTIVAL

Vancouver hosts this year's annual festival of contemporary Canadian theatre that kicks off today. Offerings include d'bi young's *blood.claaf*, a "one womban" story of blood that has bagged a string of awards, and Darren O'Donnell's *[boxhead]*, an existential, symbolist romp about



Bard on the Beach kicks off with gender-bender Twelfth Night.

a young geneticist who wakes up to discover all thoughts come from God, all his words come from the Devil, and his desire for love is a habit acquired from the movies. To June 14. \$22 to \$35. At various venues. 604-684-2787.

CONTINUING

THE RETURN OF FUTURISTI

★★★

There's something inherently muddled about running an historical revue of futurist theatre. The

futurists themselves would have, theoretically, abhorred the notion. Futurism as a movement was more an expression, a revolt, than a stable philosophy. Bursting from a manifesto in 1909 and finally dying in the 1940s, it produced a litany of absurd, bird-flipping assaults on preconceived forms. But the movements it helped engender, like surrealism and constructivism, have since become more entrenched in the cannon.

Theatre UBC, in collaboration with BellaLuna, delivers 23 miniature futurist "playlets" (some only a minute long). At times they're embarrassing, at times they're delightful, but they're always lusty. It's a bundle of innovations crammed against each other like a fistful of wildflowers.

And wild they are (if dried by time). In garish clown face, 12 actors romp through absurd experimentations that continue to

confound audience expectations.

All totalled, the medley is an amusing tear-down of theatrical convention that leaves us wondering: Why are these experiments still so amusing, so unexpected? If the futurists were at all successful, shouldn't their work have been absorbed into the mainstream? Or did they, rather, achieve perpetual youth, perpetual novelty?

The problem with glorying in one's youth is that you're bound to eat your words. Inexorably, you'll lose the thing you praise. Whatever the consequences, the young adults onstage do revel in their own greenness and optimistic gusto.

The most curious part, though, is that this exuberance is contained within the bounds of a dated (and arguably dusty) form. To June 7. \$8 to \$20. Frederic Wood Theatre, 6354 Crescent Rd., UBC, 604-822-2678.

THE PRODUCERS

★★½

Bill Miller directs a slice of Mel Brooks's appealingly (and pan-offensive) musical. Brazeau is perfectly cast as the mild-mannered accountant Leo Bloom (Josh Epstein plays him with a surefire flop). *Springtime for Hitler*. Bu starts out apparently chaotic. Gene Wilder (from the 1950s) and it feels forced. The manic climax occurs when a giant swastika onstage reflects normally revealed by a massive mirror overhead. It's expressed through faded projection in the Arts Club production. To July 13. \$33 to \$45. Stanley Industrial Alliance Theatre, 2750 Granville St., 604-681-1111. Michael Harris. Vanlistings@globeandmail.com