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Spicy & Cheap

New, improv'd Shakespeare

By Lisa Drostova and Kelly Vance

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7/21-7/24



Al Cameron



Bat Out of Hell



Jan Zvaifler in *The Mysterious Mr. Looney*.

Can't handle Shakespeare because he's too complicated, too wordy, or his plots leave your head all twisty? Love the language, but can't stand the body count? Just wish there were more sex? Fear not, for the Un-Scripted Theater Company has your medicine. **Improv'd Bawdy Shakespeare** is two hours of clever raunch in period costume from some of the most experienced comedy improvisers in the Bay Area. It's all the best parts of the Bard, without long stretches of incomprehensible speechifying or tragic murders, and the show is different every time. This is ideal not only for audiences who get restless with real Shakespeare, but for actors who aren't hot at memorizing huge numbing blocks of text.

Lately there's been an explosion of improv, leading us to believe that improv classes will soon overtake traffic schools and ten-minute oil-change places in sheer quantity. But cautious consumers need not fear: Many of Un-Scripted's bevy of veterans are well known from the seminal BATS (Bay Area TheatreSports) program, the venerable Flash Family, and several other improv operations. The Un-Scripted Web site is heavily larded with familiar BATS names such as Cort Worthington, Lisa Larice, and Un-Scripted alum Corey Rosen, of *A**hole Monologues* fame. Others may be familiar to audiences from their nonimprov performances, such as Dave Dyson's invoking the "vasty deep" in Impact Theatre's *Henry 4: The Remix*.

This isn't *What's My Line?*-type stuff. Un-Scripted works in the exacting long-form; part of the fun is watching how the cast neatly wraps up all the loose ends tossed out by the assorted wenches, rogues, and royalty. Successful comedy improv requires performers to be fast on their feet; long-form adds the challenge of keeping characters and plot on the rails while the props and costumes fly. Spicy and cheap, *Improv'd Bawdy Shakespeare* should go a long way toward healing the wounds of having had to read the dry and sexless *Julius Caesar* in high school.

Improv'd Bawdy Shakespeare runs Friday and Saturday nights at 8 until July 24. Temescal Arts Center, 511 48th Street at Telegraph. Info: Un-Scripted.com -- Lisa



Drostova

7/21-7/25

Hubbly-Bubbly

Dot-Bombast

Remember the dot-com bubble? Remember how it ruined things for many people in the Bay Area, and how relieved they were when it finally burst? Return with us now to those thrilling days of pie-in-the-sky IPOs, high-priced revolting restaurants, and slobbering greed -- the ***Bat Out of Hell*** is back. David Scott Marley's 1990s-style adaptation of Johann Strauss Jr.'s satiric operetta *Die Fledermaus* pokes fun at Berkeley political correctness as well as techno-nouveau-riche in the story of one Bill Orlovsky, teenage-computer-wizard-turned-gazillionaire. It runs through July 25, in a fully staged production with orchestra and chorus, at Berkeley's Julia Morgan Theatre, 2640 College Ave. Tickets \$15-\$40 from 925-798-1903. BerkeleyOpera.org -- **Kelly Vance**

7/24-8/29

Looney Tones

In its new, collaboratively developed play, ***The Mysterious Mr. Looney***, Central Works Theater Ensemble tackles the old *Who-Really-Wrote-Shakespeare* question with the tale of Mr. Looney (pronounced *Lone-y*), a mystery guest at the English country home of a 1920s-era Shakespearean scholar. Christopher Herald, Jan Zvaifler, and John Patrick Moore star in the gothic-infused literary mystery drama, in a production directed by the playwright, Gary Graves. It opens Saturday at 8 p.m., then runs Thursdays through Sundays through August 29, at the Berkeley City Club, 2315 Durant Ave. Reservations and information: 510-558-1381 or CentralWorks.org -- **Kelly Vance**

SUN 7/25

Russian All-Around

The **Russian National Orchestra** struggled into existence fourteen years ago, during the collapse of the Soviet Union, but what was once a fledgling, all-Russian philharmonic has evolved into a powerhouse with global reach. Sunday's performance at Zellerbach Hall, with the **San Francisco Symphony Chorus**, will be under the baton of American Charles Ketcham, and will feature American soprano Lisa Delan and Russian baritone Vladimir Chernov. The program includes Berkeleyan composer John Adams' *The Chairman Dances*, SF composer Gordon Getty's *Joan and the Bells*, and works by Tchaikovsky and RNO artistic director Mikhail Pletnev. 3 p.m., \$32-\$60, 510-642-9988 or CalPerfs.berkeley.edu -- **Stefanie Kalem**