

having an affair with Bob that's so secret everyone in town, knows about it except for the mayor himself. Conflict arises when former local geek turned tycoon Elwin (David Anthony Higgins) shows up to make Bob a deal that could change his life -though at a terrible cost. Director Matt Roth helms this year's production, bringing an assured eye for gags and a flair for comic timing. Many of the show's funniest drunken antics appear to be improvised, though it's impossible to imagine that the show varies too much from night to night. Occasionally, the chaotic atmosphere tends to get the better of some of the staging: Characters talk over each other or merely roar, making it hard to keep track of who's doing what awful boozy thing to whom. However, the show puts its humor where its mouth is - with gags as frantic and as funny as they are jaw-dropping. Particularly hilarious turns are offered by Keyes' dorky cop, by McKay's slatternly boozehead, and by Schwaba-Vigne's comically unbalanced wife of the mayor. Theatre Asylum, 6320 Santa Monica Blvd, Hollywood; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.; thru December 20. <http://plays411.com/bobs>. (Paul Birchall)

NEW REVIEW GO A CHRISTMAS CAROL



Photo by Doug Engalla

It takes a village to tell Charles Dickens' morality play, or at least, that's the impression left by director Ernest A. Figueroa. Twenty-five actors crowd his intimate stage and Figueroa divvies up Dickens' lines between them. The great ghost story here rings

perulously like a recitation. Allowing Bob Cratchit (Doug Haverty) to mouth off about Scrooge's (Chris Winfield) inner- life makes the humble accountant seem too big for his threadbare britches. (Liz Nankin's costumes are fantastic.) Though Richard Helleson and David De Berry's musical numbers could use more practice, this production has the smart stroke of turning the three spirits into Bunraku puppets; the third and last, the Ghost of Christmas Future, is frightening, and Marley lurches into Scrooge's chamber with two puppeteers brandishing his long chains on a stick. Jim Carrey's 3-D movie of Carol is this season's best channeler of Dickens' wit, invention and spark. But if you like your tradition live, this production is fine enough. Lonny Chapman Group Repertory Theatre, 10900 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood; Fri.-Sat., 7:30 p.m.; Sun., 2 & 7:30 p.m.; thru Dec. 20. www.thegrouprep.com. (818) 700-4878. (Amy Nicholson)

NEW REVIEW GO FROSTY THE SNOW MANILOW Take one measure of maudlin, '70s TV holiday kitsch; add a dozen, inappropriate pop melodies from the same decade's premiere, adult-contemporary hit maker; fold in generous helpings of sardonically retooled lyrics and camped-up choreography; season to taste with puerile puns, off-color double entendres and relentlessly self-mocking ad libs; and half-bake for an hour with an ensemble of crack clowning parodists. This, in a roasted chestnut shell, is the winning recipe for the Troubadour Theater Company's annual, off-kilter Christmas confections. To their diehard fans, it is immaterial that this year's musically mashed-up targets are the treacly, 1969 cartoon special, Frosty the Snowman, or the sentimental mewling of the Barry Manilow songbook. With top chef/director Matt Walker again at the controls of the comedy Cuisinart, all that matters is that the resulting puree is flavored with his peerless timing and mischievously wry sensibility. Paul C. Vogt fills designer Sharon McGunigle's appropriately ludicrous Frosty costume as the magically animated snowman who hates kids but is nonetheless resigned to being saved from melting by the cloyingly effusive schoolgirl, Karen (Christine Lakin). Walker is the evil magician, Hinkle, who throws plot complications and one-liners in their path. Standouts include Beth Kennedy, who literally stops the show to perform insult stand-up as the Winter Warlock (think Juliette Lewis on stilts); Rick Batalla as the Station Master with Vegas ambitions; Jack McGee as the cantankerous narrator and a jive-talking Santa; and the always remarkable musical director, Eric Heinly, and his Troubadour band. Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Dr., Burbank; Wed.-Fri., 8 p.m.; Sat., 4 & 8 p.m. (no perfs Dec. 24, 25, 31, or Jan. 1); thru Jan. 17. (818) 955-8101. A Troubadour Theater Company production. (Bill Raden)

NEW REVIEW GO THE GLASS MENDACITY



Photo by Kristina Haddad

Devotees of Tennessee Williams will surely delight in this send-up of the playwright's best known

KROQ Almost Acoustic Christmas Night 2

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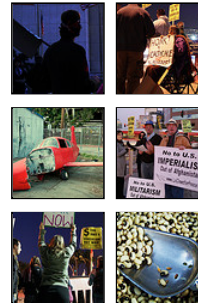
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PERSONAL OF THE DAY



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