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SATURDAY, JULY 7 | 2012 | EDITOR MAGGIE LANGRICK 604.605.2101 | MLANGRICK@VANCOUVERSUN.COM

WEEKEND EXTRA

## WHEREFORE ART THOU, ROMANCE?

BY DENISE RYAN  
VANCOUVER SUN

The women at the back table of the Bottleneck bar on Granville Street are a cluster of long locks, funky accessories, a mix of tanned and fair, naturally athletic bodies and discreetly dabbed lip gloss. The conversation about the impossibility of finding man-love in Lotus Land ricochets between raucous laughter and thoughtful reflection until the table goes silent and the subject finally sinks, like a stone thrown in an impossibly dark wishing well.

"This is not a lighthearted issue," says Jodi Derkson. "There is a serious problem here."

This is Vancouver, the women explain, in conversational shorthand that speaks volumes about the city's widely-perceived shortcomings for straight daters. (Same-sex dating in Vancouver has its own set of opportunities and challenges that warrants a whole other article.)

For many singles, the stepping stones to love's distant shore are broken or missing — the appreciative or inviting smiles, casual conversations struck up on street corners, in bars, restaurants, grocery lineups and online dating offer only a small pool of confused and confusing possibilities.

They're eligible, attractive and looking for love. So why is it so hard for singles to get a date in Vancouver?



GLENN BAGLO/PNG

CONTINUED ON F6

Looking for love in Vancouver are (from left) Jodi Derkson, Rachel Fox and Jody Radu.

STAGE | REVIEW

## Shakespeare-as-sitcom brings belly laughs

Falstaff farce is a riot of retro Canadiana in its relocated setting of 1960s Windsor, Ont.



Mrs. Ford (Amber Lewis) and Mrs. Page (Katey Wright) in the Merry Wives of Windsor.

**MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR**  
**Bard on the Beach Festival**  
**When:** Until Sept. 21  
**Where:** Douglas Campbell Stage, Vanier Park  
**Tickets and info:** bardonthebeach.org

BY MARK LEIREN-YOUNG

Shakespeare is credited with pretty much inventing the English language — or at least most of our favourite phrases — but as a successful working playwright he also deserves credit for inventing the sequel and the spinoff.

Legend has it that the Bard wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor* after Queen Elizabeth demanded to see Falstaff, the cowardly comic braggart from the two Henry IV plays, fall in love.

The legend is probably just that, but whether or not Elizabeth wanted to see Falstaff again, it's a safe bet Elizabethan audiences did — and based on the opening night performance of the Bard on the Beach production Vancouver audiences will too.

The first big laugh comes as soon as you step into the Douglas Campbell Studio Stage to discover the play has been relocated to Windsor, Ont. where Falstaff (Ashley Wright) is a pompous and broke British foreigner who underestimates a small town full of clever Canucks.

The primary setting is a country and western bar where musicians occasionally punctuate jokes with musical punchlines like a fiddler's rendition of the theme from *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. The action has been transported to 1968 allowing the designers to have a field day decorating à la *Mad Men* and dressing madder women, scoring laughs off period pieces like old comic books and lava lamps and classic Canadiana including curling gear and Hudson's Bay blankets. Imagine if Shakespeare adapted Stompin' Tom's *Sudbury Saturday Night*.

Everything about Pam Johnson's scenery is so tasty, it seems pretty much created to be chewed and almost every cartoony costume by Drew Facey scores a smile. Delightfully directed by Johanna Wright, the show features a

cast of scene-stealers in a play where every scene was designed to be stolen and almost everyone on stage has something fun, funny or downright loopy to do pretty much all the time.

*Merry Wives* is Shakespeare as sitcom. Falstaff sets out to woo two married women, our merry, merrymaking wives — Mrs. Ford (Amber Lewis) and Mrs. Page (Katey Wright) — in the hopes of charming them out of their fortunes and possibly their dresses. When the duo discovers the bulbous Brit sent them both identical indecent proposals the outraged pair sets out to humiliate him with schemes worthy of Lucy and Ethyl.

Mrs. Ford struts her '60s sex appeal to torment her would-be suitor and Mrs. Page offers immoral support. Mr. Ford (Scott Bellis) is the respectable would-be cuckold with a jealous streak who sets out to catch his spouse cheating and disguises himself as a beatnik poet to spy on her. His jealousy as Ford is funny, his Beatnik scheming and consciousness streaming as he tries to discover the details of his wife's indiscretions from Falstaff is a highlight.

Allan Morgan as Justice Shallow, the artful codger who's — surprise — shallow, practically scores an ovation every time he arrives onstage via scooter in his ever-present Shriner's hat and contagious grin. The parson (Anousha Alamian) is a comic cross between Deepak Chopra and Apu from *The Simpsons*. Patti Allan's Mistress Quickly — the scheming maid who's at the centre of every storm and the woman Falstaff would fall in love with if he wasn't so smitten with himself — is a combination of a classic sitcom dame like Alice from *The Brady Bunch* and Mae West, and the Mae West matters, because a lot of the lines that are double entendres now were straight up singles back in the day.

Reimagined as a *Glee*-style musical — it's open-mike night at The Garter Inn — contemporary-ish karaoke favourites seamlessly bridge the scenes and renditions of old-time classics like *Stand By Your Man*, *Crazy* and *These Boots are Made for Walkin'* bring the house down, just like they did in Shakespeare's day.

Special to The Sun

ONLINE	INSIDE   F11	MONDAY
<b>Awesome Sound</b> Music lovers, check out Vancouver Sun music writer Francois Marchand's Awesome Sound blog at vancouversun.com	<b>The personal side of photography</b> Photographic works that explore the intersection where art and personal narrative meet are part of a new exhibition by Marian Penner Bancroft at the Vancouver Art Gallery.	<b>Perry team keeps Katy in fashion</b> From boisterous outfits to her multi-hued hair, Katy Perry seems to have her personal style on lock. But when it comes to fashion choices, it's her team behind the scenes working overtime.

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MARLIE COLLINS, GAELAN BEATTY.  
PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER

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"GIDDY" —Colin Thomas, The Georgia Straight

"DELICIOUSLY GOOFY" —Jerry Wasserman, The Province

"NON-STOP LAUGH-FEST" —Mark Robins, GayVancouver



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