

## Review: *Ophelia* at the Blue Theater



Tutto Theatre

### Tutto Theatre presents *Ophelia*

Th-Su @8pm, though 11/23

Blue Theatre (916 Springdale Ave)

\$15-20

[info] | [tickets]

We've heard that the works of William Shakespeare weren't all written by the man himself. This suggestion recalls the sorts of conspiracy theories riddled through Shakespearean tragedies —impossible to decide right from wrong while turning the whole story upside down. The idea that the sixteenth and seventeenth century masterpieces were crafted by not one man but a collective of geniuses poses an interesting possibility. If the poetry were the result of many voices becoming one, could new blood be added to the work and still be called Shakespeare?

With [Tutto Theatre's](#) *Ophelia*, writer and director **Dustin Wills** seems intent on adding to the canon rather than simply rewriting it. While many contemporary adaptations may either stay true to the text or blast the whole thing on an MTV-generation, "let's make Shakespeare cool" trip, Wills collages the original works with new lyrics that could have made their way onto the original Globe stage. The result makes his *Ophelia* seem like a choice the first Shakespeare (or Shakespeares) could have made if they had said, "Okay, Ophelia now becomes our main character

instead of that crybaby Hamlet."

While this ambitious effort reveals a deep understanding of the classical rhythm and language mastered four hundred years ago, it also seems to presume its audience has a substantial familiarity with the original texts. For those of us who have not seen *Hamlet* since the ninth grade, there are certain story leaps that feel somewhat large and baffling. Without the advantage of a Cliff's Notes review, Hamlet and Ophelia's transition from giddy school kids making love in secret to murderous and suicidal psychotics could use a little more fleshing out. The play, at times, feels more like a side car to the original rather than a stand alone piece.

Still, the production is beautiful. Five white-draped Ophelias represent the layered psyche of the whole—whispering, echoing and shadowing the internal dialogue of this simultaneously naive and complex character. Each takes hold of the spotlight for a brief torrent of egotistical lust, anger or despair before drowning in an on-stage pool ripe with metaphor. At critical plot points, the Ophelias syncopate into the highlight of the performance: jarring dream sequences that paint melancholy disturbance like a surrealist film. As the Ophelias drop away, Ophelia #5 **Emily Tindall's** sad, sad violin somehow captures the feeling of the entire piece with sparse flats and minors erasing the blurry line between dream and reality.

With a strong showing from the Ophelias and **Gabriel Luna** as both Hamlet and Polonius, the cast pulls off the show as if it were a classical stage piece. Often, it is hard to tell what is original text and what is new, a fact that attests to Wills' clear understanding of Shakespeare's works. If *Hamlet* really is the result of many writers' voices, perhaps plays like *Ophelia* continue to tell the story.

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