

>NEWSLETTER

Subscribe and receive
weekly updates via e-mail

>FEEDBACK

Write to us

>GENERAL INFO

About L.A. Weekly, staff,
advertise on the web,
how to get the paper, job
listings...

>PRINT ADVERTISING

waits outside to begin a party. The banker slowly realizes that the old woman's "entitlement" has nothing to do with his bank, that she's at the wrong office on the wrong side of town. Byrd's indignant *babushka* is nicely textured, but director Michael Michetti lifts a style of farce from the wrong Borscht Belt — one-note hysterics and loud wisecracks that drown out Chekhov's more subtly pained humor, and the cultural anthropology underlying it — a scorched-earth effect making it a Russian comedy bludgeoned by American intervention.

An overdue payment also forms the core of *The Bear*, probably Chekhov's most popular one-act, about a boor (Harry Groener in top form), facing foreclosure, who bursts in on an aging widow (the childlike Dawn Didawick) to collect his debt. Her icy stubbornness only fuels his underlying affections. The connection between rage, lust and economics again shows how firmly rooted Chekhov's comedies are in the local landscape, and though director Stephanie Shroyer's nicely modulated production looks a bit like an American sitcom, there's no harm to its core. Jeremy Lawrence's goggle-eyed servant is also well-calibrated for gentle, comic effect.

OVER ON THE WESTSIDE, Lost Dog Productions presents Matt Yamashita's affectionate parody of *The Three Sisters* called *Sisters, Oregon*, relocated to the 1890s Pacific Northwest for no discernible reason. It's a bit tawdry and dribbling with anachronisms. Here, Vershinin blows into town as the new sheriff. Under Arthur Milliken's direction, actors clump around in various performance styles. The humor also comes from the Catskills (via late-night cable TV) — running gags, sexual innuendoes and exposed buttocks. The Oregon setting somehow makes this permissible as the production careens between being completely artless and very funny. It sustains attention mostly from its freewheeling, juvenile charm. Purists will be furious, though I doubt Chekhov would give a hoot. This wink at the similarities between the two cultures comes as though direct from the studios of *Saturday Night Live*. Anything authentically Russian has been cleanly eviscerated, which really makes the play a parody of unwitting American arrogance.

CHEKHOV X 4 | By ANTON CHEKHOV | Presented by the ANTAEUS COMPANY at the NEW PLACE THEATER, 4900 Vineland Ave., North Hollywood | Through March 21 | (818) 506-5436

SISTERS, OREGON | By MATT YAMASHITA | LOST DOG PRODUCTIONS at the BLACK BOX THEATER, 12420 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles | Through March 27 | (310) 489-0617

 [E-mail this story to a friend.](#)