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 Milliker'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 careers 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

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