

EYE WEEKLY

NOVEMBER 23, 2006

On Stage

RITTER, DENE, VOSS ★★★★★

Featuring Shannon Perreault, Maev Beaty, Greg Thomas. Written by Thomas Bernhard. Directed by Adam Seelig. Presented by One Little Goat. To Dec 3. Fri-Sat, Tue-Wed 8pm; Sun 2pm. \$10-\$20; Sun PWYC. Alchemy Theatre, 133 Tecumseth. 416-915-0201. www.onelittlegoat.org.

Thomas Bernhard's Ritter, Dene, Voss - a breathless, two-hour Beckettian farce loosely based on the life of Ludwig Wittgenstein, written by a famously misanthropic Viennese playwright whose hatred of life's constrictions extended to a refusal to use punctuation in his scripts - is the sort of show that sounds like a lot of needless hard work.

Why not buy a ticket for Pippin instead? It's got Micky Dolenz in it! Didn't he sing the lead vocal on "Last Train to Clarksville"?

But forget it: grammar's loss is our gain, so save your money for the dead Austrian philosopher, not the Monkee (Michael Nesmith was cooler, anyway). One Little Goat's production, pacily directed by Adam Seelig and performed with great élan by its three cast members, is lighter than a cream puff - several of which, incidentally, the actor Greg Thomas (playing the Wittgenstein manqué) shoves into his mouth during one of the show's most memorable scenes. And it still won't shut him up.

Ritter, Dene, Voss takes place over the course of a single meal: the diners are Thomas and his two sisters (the excellent Shannon Perreault and Maev Beaty), two failed actresses with whom he shares a barely hidden sexual bond. If the show is hard work, it's a burden taken up entirely by the performers: Beaty in particular, having appeared in a very middling production at this year's Summerworks, is especially good; while Thomas gives a performance that is both intensely mannered and exquisitely controlled. It may sound heavy, but it's more fun than reading Tractatus - better cream puffs, at any rate.

PAUL ISAACS