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Keep your eyes on the Pies

By COLIN MacLEAN

Thrubwell's Pies is a new comedy from actor/playwright Belinda Cornish.

If you saw her hilarious Diamond Dog at the Fringe this year you will certainly remember her. That play took place among London's brain dead criminal lower classes.

For her latest work, she travels westward to Somerset to spin a comic tale of murder, mystery and magic in a small English country town.

The story is much too convoluted to try and attempt here, but it's something about a banshee who grants two wishes to a local. One wish is for eternal life.

As the tale begins, Alisha Montague (Sheri Somerville) is already 135 years old. Her new husband, Shepton (Mark Meer), has taken over the family pie business - but is failing because, for some reason, the pies don't taste as good as they used to.

And then there's the toothsome young Nettie (Amy Shostak) who has opened up a new pie shop in the village. And we mustn't forget Scrofula (Cornish), the mysterious maid who walks like some malevolent bird and hides a terrible secret.

No one takes all this very seriously and the cast, benefiting from years of working together (and the mood-perfect direction of Jeff Haslam), squeezes every bit of humour out of the dialogue - which runs to, "I thought it was propitious to introduce myself," and, "Let's go patronize some locals."

A ghost story holds the thing together and it could be quite spooky if you weren't laughing quite so hard.

30hm Suns out of five

With the season opener at Theatre Network we, at last, find out what happened to Godot. You know, the guy in Beckett's Waiting for Godot who never does show up.

Well, he was on his way but was arrested by two cops straight out of television.

The two dicks are not good cop/bad cop. They are more like dumb and dumber.

And, complete with dapper black suit and the traditional bowler hat, poor Godot spends his time incarcerated in a cinder block cell right out of Law and Order.

The setting may be familiar but these three inhabit their own surreal world. Perhaps it is not as rich as Beckett's, but it is consistently clever and funny.

You see it's like this - Godot was supposed to deliver a parcel (which is really HOPE). But the two cops, one murderous and the other a dolt, for reasons of their own keep him from leaving the cell. The outside world is malignant and dangerous anyway. When HOPE can't be delivered, one of the horsemen of the apocalypse is let loose and Armageddon ends the play.

Or, possibly, the play is not about any of that.

Like the original, Brendan Gall's work is confounding and surreal and almost any interpretation could be read into it.

Director Bradley Moss seems to have unlimited comic resources and his dream cast (Julien Arnold/Brian Dooley/ Collin Doyle/James Hamilton and Christopher Schultz) perform with off-centre inspiration.

And like the original (one of the seminal works of the 20th century), the play is entertaining theatre and will inspire much discussion on the way home.

Alias Godot, a production of Theatre Network, plays through Oct. 12 at the Roxy Theatre, 10708 124 St.

Four Suns out of five