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- Chris Jones, Chicago Tribune

**"MERCILESSLY FUNNY!"**  
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90 MINUTES"**  
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JEFF AWARD  
WINNER

## The World Over



**MIME TO CHANGE** The State's cast acts out.



**The State Theatre** (see Fringe & storefront). By Keith Bunin. Dir. Tim Speicher. With ensemble cast. 2hrs 25mins; one intermission.

This 2002 work seems an odd departure for Keith Bunin, a playwright best known for psychological realism in pieces like *The Credeaux Canvas* and *The Busy World Is Hushed* as well as his work on HBO's *In Treatment*. This attempted epic, with dozens of characters and locations, plays like a blend of *Candide* and *The Princess Bride*. Protagonist Adam (Daniel Gilbert), discovered orphaned on a deserted island, hears a tale about the lost prince of the kingdom of Gildaroy and comes to believe he's the prince, even though he's assured the whole thing is nothing but a children's story.

Undeterred, Adam sets out on a hero's journey to find a kingdom he's repeatedly told doesn't exist.

Along the way, Adam solves riddles and slays mythical creatures; he also gains an adoring wife who bears twins, but his single-minded quest for Gildaroy causes him to lose his family. Bunin's moral, it seems, is not to let fairy-tale perfection be the enemy of the good, but the playwright takes a half-dozen detours too many on his way there. Tim Speicher's production is appealingly lo-fi, with a story-theater aesthetic mixing seven barefoot actors with stylized projections, props and impressive puppets built of cardboard and packing tape. Yet his lethargic scene transitions repeatedly take the wind out of the sails, and the cast members tend too broad, with an overreliance on funny accents. —Kris Vire

## Woman School



**Vintage Theater Collective** (see Fringe & storefront). By Eric Powell Holm. Dir. Katy Carolina Collins. With Adam Soule, Kelley Ristow. 1hr 25mins; no intermission.

The only way to ensure a wife's fidelity is to marry an ignorant woman. Arnolphe (Adam Soule) believes this so heartily he's started a school for the express purpose of keeping his future bride Agnes (Kelley Ristow) moronic, with two drunken, horny housemaids teaching her their extensive knowledge of sexual positions and Katy Perry lyrics.

Vintage's take on Molière's bawdy comedy *L'École des Femmes* has a Sean Graney-lite quality: Characters interact with the audience before the show, the costumes are youthful and modern (aside from the horrendous wigs), and the language is similar to

that of the source material but throws in the occasional curse word to score a laugh. Eric Powell Holm's new adaptation mostly retains the original's rhyming structure, and the ensemble does its best work when it uses the musicality and rhythm of the language to push the story.

Katy Carolina Collins's overly aggressive direction becomes apparent before the show begins. During the awkward and unnecessary preshow bit, Caitlin Costello and Emily Shain force dialogue with the audience as they dance around the room for 15 minutes. The pair takes its servant characters' raucous, Three Stooges-like clowning so far over the top that they become abrasive, detracting from Holm's language; the sluggish execution of the physical comedy diminishes its impact. Holm has crafted a fine adaptation. Collins needs to trust that the words are enough. —Oliver Sava

PHOTO: ZANE DAVIS