

Hip-hop flows in Bard's update

By **STEVE BARNES**

Senior writer

GLENS FALLS — It's only the beginning of July, but when a production is as winning and hilarious as "Bomb-itty of Errors" at Adirondack Theatre Festival, there's little danger of being wrong when predicting that stage fans won't have a better time at a show all summer.

"Bomb-itty," a hip-hop adaptation of Shakespeare's story of two sets of identical twins and the many mishaps and misunderstandings that result from their mistaken identities, is a rowdy delight that's sure to please younger audiences with its contemporary attitude, humor and rhyme.

But it's still based on Shakespeare, and while ribald at times — it probably would receive a PG-13 movie rating — the show is so engaging and expertly performed that grandparents shouldn't fear being distressed or alienated. If the hip-hop poetry takes some ear acclimation, well, so does Shakespeare's. As with traditional productions of the Bard's work, after a few minutes the language starts to make sense, and you find pleasures in its distinctiveness and flavor.

The show was conceived as a student project at New York University in 1998 by its four authors — Jordan Allen-Dutton, Jason Catalano, Gregory Qaiyum, Erik Weiner — and is being performed by other actor-rappers for the first time at ATF. You wouldn't know



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RAPPER-ACTORS Jason Babinsky, from left, Benton Greene, Jake Mosser and Omar Evans play multiple roles with style in "Bomb-itty of Errors" at Adirondack Theatre Festival.

the quartet onstage at the Wood Theater are newcomers to their parts, given the zany confidence of their comedy and rhyming — or, for that matter, how good they are at ultrafast costume changes.

As in "The Comedy of Errors," the story follows quadruplets who are two sets of identical twins — a pair of strapping specimens and a two "runts." To further confuse matters, each shorty is named Dromio, while their big brothers both answer to Antipholus. When as toddlers their mother couldn't care for them, one big and one little guy got shunted to Syracuse, the other two to Ephesus. After all

four end up in the same city seeking fame as DJs, mix-up mayhem ensues.

The entire show is sung, rapped or rhymed, save for a few asides and punch lines, with beats, mixes and scratches provided by a DJ (Jordan Connors) who presides from an elevated booth upstage. The music, from old-school hip-hop to soul-influenced love songs and reggae-inflected rousers, is always infectious and often thrilling.

But the real joy comes from watching the four talented actors tear up the material: Jake Mosser, Benton Greene, Omar Evans and Jason Babinsky. Each plays multi-

Stage review

"BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS"

- **When:** 8 p.m. Thursday
- **Where:** Adirondack Theatre Festival at the Charles R. Wood Theater, 207 Glen St., Glens Falls
- **Running time:** 105 minutes; no intermission
- **Continues:** 8 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday; through July 15
- **Tickets:** \$27
- **Info:** 798-9663, Web site: <http://www.atfestival.org>

ple parts, often having only seconds during an offstage trip to transform from, say, a basketball-shorts-wearing Dromio to a sheer-skirted ditz in a blonde-pigtailed wig, or from another Dromio to an herbalist in multicolored rags who resembles either George "P-Funk" Clinton or, as another character says, "a Whoopi Goldberg-lookin' Rastafari."

All four have abundant charm, but Babinsky, as Dromio of Ephesus, is a true marvel. It's at times disorienting to have to remind yourself the same guy is also playing the blonde ditz and macho gay cop. He's that good.

The biggest disappointment about "Bomb-itty of Errors" is its short run, which ends July 15. You've got a week. Don't miss it.

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