

New in L.A. theater

By MARGARET GRAY

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In the 99-Seat Beat, our weekly look at L.A.'s smaller stages, four productions combine elements in odd and fruitful ways. "Anna in the Tropics" unleashes Tolstoy on Florida factory workers. "Daniel's Husband" explores how marriage equality complicates a gay romance. "Crime and Punishment" externalizes a murderer's psychological state. And in "Julius Weezer," the Troubadour Theater Company throws Shakespeare into a room with a contemporary pop-punk band and locks the door.

The Troubies return with 'Julius Weezer'

The essentials: L.A.'s beloved Troubadour Theatre Company has landed at El Portal Theatre in North Hollywood, where it launches its 25th season with a new Shakespeare/pop music mash-up, "Julius Weezer" — the tragedy of "Julius Caesar" set to the oeuvre of the indie geek-rock quartet Weezer.

Why this? The uninitiated might think, "Yeah, Weezer rhymes with Caesar, but can this coincidence carry a show?" Anybody who has experienced the Troubies' Bardic pastiches — "Fleetwood Macbeth," "The Two Gentleman of Chicago," "Much A-Doobie Brothers About Nothing" — can answer definitively: And then some! Troubie favorites Matt Walker, Beth Kennedy, Rick Batalla and Rob Nagle can make anything funny. They might also convince you that a pun isn't just a pun when it comes to comparative literature. For instance, Weezer frontman Rivers Cuomo is arguably the Julius Caesar of our time. Replace "sweater" with "toga" in "Undone," and the score writes itself.

The details: El Portal Theatre, 11206 Weddington Ave., North Hollywood. Previews 8 p.m. Saturday, 4 p.m. Sunday, 8 p.m. Thursday. Opens May 10. Performances 8 p.m. Fridays, 4 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 4 p.m. Sundays, through May 19. \$50-\$65. (818) 508-4200 or (866) 811-4111 or elportaltheatre.com