

## 'Twelve Dates' provides holiday fun for adults

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### Document Text

\*or some years, now, the American Shakespeare Center's December season has centered mostly on two productions: "The Santaland Diaries" and "A Christmas Carol." While these now-standard works are again offered at the Blackfriars Playhouse, a third seasonally themed play has been added to the mix, and it's a world premiere, to boot.

It's "The Twelve Dates of Christmas," a one-woman show written by its star, Ginna Hoben. Right off the bat you should know that this 75-minute performance isn't appropriate for the ankle biter in your family; there's some language not generally found in Sunday School classes, some sexual references, and some pretty adult assessments of life, love and the holidays.

But if you're a grownup and you like your Christmas comedies sprinkled with a little alum as well as powdered sugar, then you're probably going to love this show. It's witty, funny and, even though the ASC describes it as depicting "how much the holidays suck after your heart's been crushed," it's surprisingly light-hearted and touching.

"Twelve Dates" is the story of Mary, an actress in New York, who catches her fiancé lip-locking with his co-worker on national television at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. Mary chucks her engagement ring into a Salvation Army kettle and spends the next year's worth of holidays erratically, but often hilariously, pursuing one inadequate relationship after another.

Hoben, who is a veteran of the Blackfriars and many other stages, has a talent for storytelling and fully exploits it in this romantic comedy that's loosely based on her own experiences. The vignettes and commentary never lag or fail to entertain. But more than that, the play rises far beyond a random collection of events; the incidents hang together as a complete and coherent work that has a smooth, easy but distinct forward motion.

That's a product of good writing.

As for Hoben's performance, "Twelve Dates" is the best thing I've seen her do -- and I've seen her do a boatload of superior work at Blackfriars. Bright, funny and sexy, she easily assumes the voices and mannerisms of a dozen or so characters and -- incredibly -- makes us forget that there's only one woman on stage. While Hoben is an accomplished performer in other people's plays, she is masterful in this, her own creation.

Although "Twelve Dates" is essentially a one-woman show, ASC troupers Brandi Rhome and Kelly McKinnon provide musical support and act as a sort of Greek chorus.

And one minor note on the pre-show: Come on; it's a Christmas tree, guys, not a "holiday" tree. Sheesh.

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### Abstract (Document Summary)

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