

Beach slap

Building on Sand

By [Jessica Santina](#)

I've been writing about local theater for the RN&R for years. So it's a bit embarrassing to admit that, although I knew that the Goodluck Macbeth Theatre Company got new digs in Midtown over a year ago, I only just made my first visit to the new space last weekend, for opening night of *Building on Sand*.

GLM tends to be innovative and ambitious, and tries things few others have. To illustrate, this season features movie sing-along events (complete with props), quirky life-drawing events, and this latest production, a British farce by Claire Booker which is making its U.S. debut on the GLM stage. And if you haven't been to GLM's new space either, I think it's time you went.

In the manner of Molière—or, dare I say it, a Benny Hill sketch—this seaside farce involves lots of contrived situations, misunderstandings, naughty behavior and characters that are adorably weird.

The play opens as five people arrive for a holiday by the sea in Sussex, England. They are Richard and Julliette Jenkins (Ian Sorensen and Amanda McHenry); Richard's best friend, Dan Crisp (Marvin Gonzalez), a playboy who can't seem to get enough tail; Dan's latest conquest, a ditzy French girl named Berenice Dupont (Jessica Johnson); and Julliette's Aunt Dot (Jeanne Weiser), a batty old woman who's terrified of water and arrives at Sussex in a scuba mask, a snorkel and pink wellies. Social worker Julliette's plan is to convince her aunt to give up her delusion that the ocean will flood England and get over her fear of the water, while everyone else gets to enjoy a little romp at the beach. Dot convinces herself that building the sand castle she dreamed of, with its four turrets and a portcullis, will prevent England from flooding, so the group builds one for her right away in the hope that she'll chill out.

With Dot squared away, Richard, an ineffectual lump of a man who carries hand sanitizer around in his ever-present fanny pack, can focus on other matters, such as his insecurity about having a wife who's too good for him (not to mention having a best friend as charismatic as Dan). He's not convinced of her devotion, so he enlists Dan to administer a test of her loyalty: Turn that charm up to 11 and see if Julliette's capable of adultery.

And while Dan struts around in his mustache and running shorts trying to get Julliette to drop trow, Berenice tends to the increasingly emboldened Dot while masterminding her own happy ending.

The play is seriously funny—I know this despite having missed several lines due to audience laughter. And I loved that even though the characters could have become caricatures, they weren't, thanks to talented actors. For instance, Gonzalez (GLM's playwright in residence this season) avoided making Dan Crisp a smarmy jerk, and instead made him oddly appealing—you kind of want boring old Julliette to fool around with him (a stark contrast from the wishy washy role Gonzalez played in this summer's production of *Art* at Brüka).

Weiser's Aunt Dot is spacy and wonderfully weird. You just want to take whatever she's on. And as Richard, Sorensen's subtle facial expressions and awkward movements are so authentically dorky, it's clear that physical comedy is his strong suit.

There was slight awkwardness created by everyone's fake accents, as well as what looked like first night jitters, just actors settling into their roles. Nonetheless, everyone watching laughed a lot, including myself, so I'm looking forward to seeing more at Goodluck Macbeth. I won't take this much time away again.



Jeanne Weiser as Aunt Dot and Marvin Gonzalez as Dan Crisp.
 PHOTO BY ALLISON YOUNG

Building on Sand: A British Farce by the Sea is at Goodluck Macbeth, 713 S. Virginia St., Reno, through Oct. 19. For tickets or more information, visit www.goodluckmacbeth.org, calling 322-3716.