

GRAND DELUSION David Rock's relentlessly childish burlesque imagines a series of meetings between Kaiser Wilhelm II, Tsar Nicholas II and some fictional and fictionalized plenipotentiaries on the eve of the First World War. Rock speculates how, with just a little more intelligence and less selfishness, the great powers may have avoided the catastrophe that befell Europe after Archduke Ferdinand's assassination in Sarajevo. It's clear Europe never had a chance, however — at least under the playwright's heavy hand. The story's Kaiser (Kurt Fuller) is a bullying brute obsessed with his withered left arm, while the Tsar (Xander Berkeley) is a kind of lisping vaudeville comic who just wants everyone to get along. He sends a footman, Podnov (Brad Raider) to a secret conference whose members include a French general (Eric Stonestreet), the Austrian foreign minister (Timothy Omundson) and British duchess (Amanda Detmer). The participants discuss heading off the coming war, but those who can remember reading a history book in school will know how this ends. With help from John Eckert (lighting) and Shannon Scrofano (scenic design), director Larry Biederman invests the show with a footlit, Ubu-meets-music-hall fervor. Fuller and Omundson seem to have the most fun, although perhaps the show's real star is Colbert S. Davis IV's explosive sound design. LOST STUDIO, 130 S. La Brea Ave., L.A.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 4 p.m.; thru Dec. 15. (323) 960-4441. (Steven Mikulan)