



Bag&Baggage stages an adaptation of the tragedy outdoors at the Hughes Civic Center Plaza in Hillsboro

Tuesday, July 14, 2009

The Hillsboro Argus

Bag&Baggage Productions will present Hillsboro's first professional outdoor Shakespeare performance which will open this weekend and continue through Aug. 2.

The company will perform a major adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy, "Romeo and Juliet," at the Tom Hughes Civic Center Plaza in downtown Hillsboro.

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Sunday from July 17 - August 2. Tickets are \$18 for general admission, \$15 for students, seniors, veterans and active military personnel, and groups of 10 or more will pay \$12 per ticket.

Opening night, July 16, will be a special gala fundraising and auction event, including dinner, wines from throughout Washington County, to support the company's 2009-10 Venetian Theatre Season.

"Outdoor Shakespeare is a summer tradition across the world," said Scott Palmer, Bag&Baggage's artistic director. "Millions of people enjoy the Bard's plays in the great outdoors each summer. In fact, performing these works outdoors is the way they were intended to be done, and we believe it is time for Hillsboro, and Washington County, to join the party."

The event has already received significant interest from audiences, and from donors and corporate sponsors, Palmer said, including former mayor Tom Hughes, who provided a large donation for the event, along with the City of Hillsboro and US Bank.

Palmer expects more than 3,000 people to attend performances during the 3-week run at the Civic Center Plaza.

"The Plaza is a unique venue for outdoor performances," said Maggie Chapin, a Bag&Baggage company member who has appeared in every show at The Venetian but who will be working behind the scenes as assistant director and voice coach on "Romeo and Juliet."

"The plaza steps provide a perfect seating area for our audiences, there is a balcony already in place for Juliet, and a massive playing space that is ideal for sword fights and stage combat," Chapin said.

Audiences should bring cushions, low lawn chairs, blankets or other seating options as no seating is provided. There will also be food and beverage vendors on hand each evening, including a beer and wine garden, so no outside food and beverages are allowed in the performance.

Palmer has extensive experience directing outdoor Shakespeare, and was the founding artistic director of Scotland's only dedicated Shakespeare company and directed more than a dozen outdoor performances of Shakespeare's work there.

For the past three years, Palmer has been the director of Oregon State University's Bard in the Quad

Summer Shakespeare festival, and his work on adapting Shakespeare for outdoor performance has been featured in a number of theatre textbooks.

The adaptation is based on original source material used by Shakespeare for "Romeo and Juliet" and includes new verse writing, selections of material from medieval writings, and adapted poetry from the writings of John Keats.

Palmer said, "One of the most exciting things for me as a director and adaptor is to follow Shakespeare's own process by incorporating and editing the works of other writers and poets into a new script. For this script, I've adapted the same works Shakespeare used alongside other poetry and, for the first time, I tried my hand at writing my own verse."

This adaptation is "somewhat darker and more mature" than some versions and may not be suitable for children under the age of 12.

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