

MEDIA ADVISORY --

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Inland Stage Features Reversed Sex 'Hamlet'

The Inland Stage Company will feature a reversed sex adaptation of the Bard's classic, "Hamlet." "The Suffragette Hamlet" opens March 11 at the Esplanade Art Center in San Jacinto.

"I believe adaptation is the best way to show the timeless nature of a piece," said Director Darcie Flansburg. "I love adapting Shakespeare's works specifically because of the universal themes that seamlessly run through each play."

This will be the second time Flansburg has directed the show, having co-directed a contemporary adaptation with fellow thespian Yvonne Flack.

This time Flack will be playing the titular role, set in 1919 Denmark.

"'Hamlet' has been a long time obsession of mine. In fact, my entire dissertation is based around non-Western adaptations of the play," Flack said. "But besides my purely academic interests in what I consider the greatest piece of Western literature, playing Hamlet is every classical actor's dream, and secretly every actress's. I just never seriously thought I would be able to take on the role until Darcie approached me with the idea of a reverse-gender Hamlet."

"Darcie, Yvonne and I worked together on a production of 'Hamlet' in 2008, with me as an actor in the role of the Ghost," said Artistic Director Jim Marbury. "It was a great experience, and their artistic contributions as actors and directors to Inland Stage Company over the ensuing years has been profound. When Darcie suggested that we do a "reverse sex" Hamlet, naturally I was intrigued. I thought it would be a great project for the company and our audience would like it."

In this production Monica Reichl takes on the roles of the Ghost and Claudia, the new queen of Denmark.

"Because of my job, I really don't get to do many shows, so when I do, I really want to make it something fun," Reichl said. "Doing 'Hamlet' is a great opportunity for any actor, but because of the intriguing take on this particular production, suddenly there were opportunities to be involved in the play in new ways not available in more traditional interpretations."

"What I love about the concept is, although productions throughout history have changed the gender of the titular character, this is generally the only gender switch that productions make," Flack said. "What makes this adaptation so exciting is that all of the roles are gender-reversed, and there are many wonderful and challenging roles in this play that women only rarely have the opportunity to explore."

What emerges is a world run by women, for good or ill, and the only men who inhabit it are controlled, manipulated and crushed in various ways by the women they love and trust.

"It offers ample room for character experimentation and the exploration of complicated psychological and emotional depths," Flack said.

"This production is truly a new play," Flansburg said. "Though the words remain the same (with a few pronoun switches) the characters are building entirely different dynamics. And my cast has really taken on the challenge."

The cast also includes John Leon as Gerald, Dane Johnston as Ophelio, Paige Polcene as Polly, Vanessa Downs as Lydia, Kaylee Tardy as Rosie Crantz, Erin Feaster as Guilda Stern, Cristina Otegui as Horatia, and Roselyn Leon as Osric.

"The cast is really amazing," Reichl said. "Yvonne embraces Hamlet. And while it is a Shakespearean tragedy, it's fun and compelling and there's comedy and sword play. I think people tend to prefer comedies but the tragedies offer so much all around entertainment...with body count at the end."

"One of my favorite things to emerge from this production is a fresh take on the Ghost scene, in which the reunion of mother and daughter is at once heart wrenching, tender and terrifying," Flack said. "Darcie, in her direction, has also complicated and enhanced the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelio, so that, although there are no real additions to their few scenes together, what the audience gets is a real sense of the love between them and the anguish that Hamlet's mental and emotional deterioration and the machinations of Polly have brought to the unhappy couple."

The crew also includes Kellie McDonald, who is the puppet master for the play within the play; Mark Rogers is the fight choreographer; Meredith Wright is the set dresser; Christopher Ourth will be doing hair and make-up; and Sean Longstreet will provide original music.

ISC's "Suffragette Hamlet" runs March 11 through 27 at the Esplanade Art Center, 2181 W. Esplanade Ave, San Jacinto. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 p.m. Sundays.

Tickets cost \$15 for general admission; \$12 for Students, Seniors, and Military; and \$7 for Student Rush tickets. Student Rush tickets can be purchased 10 minutes before the show begins, with valid student ID.

Tickets for "Hamlet" and "Twelfth Night," which runs in May, are \$20.

Tickets can be purchased over the phone at the Inland Stage's Box Office (951) 600-7273 Ext.100 or online at <http://www.inlandstage.org/tix.html>.

Visit www.inlandstage.org for details on ISC's 2011-2012 season.