



Luisa Frasoni and Jack Sale (Photo: Daniel Roberts)

Modern 'Romeo & Juliet' next on CSUEB stage

- July 30, 2009. Diane Daniel, CLASS Publicist, 510-885-3183 © Copyright California State University, East Bay.

A modern “Romeo & Juliet” comes to the California State University, East Bay stage Aug. 7-8 and 14-15 at 8 p.m. and Aug. 16 at 2 p.m. as the second installment in the annual Summer Highlands Theatre program. Shows will be in the University Theatre, 25800 Carlos Bee Blvd., on the northeast side of the Hayward campus.

“My approach to Shakespeare is unique. There were no representationally period costumes or period sets in the Renaissance, and the plays are riddled with contemporary Renaissance cultural references regardless of the time period in which they are set,” said Melissa Hillman, director and CSUEB lecturer.

“I believe the plays are best staged the way Shakespeare intended – contemporaneous to the audience viewing the play. I use all modern costumes, modern sets, modern music – everything. This creates a point of entry for the audience and enables them to see themselves reflected in these timeless and emotionally profound works,” she said, noting that period settings can often distance the audience.

Professor and Chair Thomas Hird acknowledges that “Romeo and Juliet” has become almost a Summer Highlands staple, but says each director and cast bring out something new. This version, in particular, he says, should speak to the college audience.

Hillman considers the classics, such as Shakespeare, the cornerstone to actor training.

“There’s so much more – learning what works and what doesn’t, becoming comfortable in front of audiences with early modern text, the basics of stage movement, the basics of stage combat – which is so prevalent in Renaissance plays,” says the director.

She believes that performing Shakespeare creates a lifelong appreciation for the arts, saying Shakespeare is one of the singlemost important writers who ever lived, and a direct experience of his texts through performance as living, breathing, true-to-life, emotionally palpable stories generates an understanding of these texts in a more thorough and exciting way than any other educational approach.

Tickets to the performances at \$15 general, \$10 youth, seniors and alumni, and \$5 for CSUEB students with I.D. may be reserved at http://class.csueastbay.edu/theatre/Ticket_Reservations.php^[5] or at 510-885-3118.