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Cal Shake's Closes Season with Much Ado

By Lou Fancher



Danny Scheie (center) nearly steals the show as Dogberry (pictured) and Don John. Photo Ohlen Alexander

Cal Shakes 2010 season, now in the midst of its final production at Orinda's Bruns Amphitheater, could be compared to a meal. Opening with the earthy starter, Steinbeck's *Pastures of Heaven*, the 10th anniversary season kept audiences well-fed with Shaw's spicy *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and an expectedly meaty *Macbeth*, directed by Minnesota's innovate, Joel Sass. Artistic Director John Moscone's frothy, decadent *Much Ado about Nothing*, playing now through October 17, is the perfect ending, with spectacular

performances by the cast. Moscone calls the play "succulent, stylish, and witty," in pre-show talks. While that might predict a pumped-up production, his *Much Ado* is clever and sophisticated. As a director, he has a delicate touch: knowing when to mock, when to charm, and when to just have a rousing good time. The play begins where *Macbeth* ends: with a sword fight. A bookend in direct counterpoint to the previous production, this sword fight is a fake, a "pretend joust" between friends.

Dan Ostling's set, in a bright, economic maneuver, takes the Scottish play's claustrophobic structures and strips them clean. The characters' lies and deceptions may be veiled, but the stage design is transparent, with wide-plank wood floors and little else to obscure the view. Piped terraces and a slender tree center stage provide no place to hide, a fact Moscone exploits with satisfying comic purpose, especially in a scene involving *Beatrice*, played by Dominique Lozano. Lozano, in a role requiring

humor, intelligence and a touch of nasty, is impeccable. Like her director, she knows when to toss off a line, when to add or subtract a gesture, and how to make the whole thing look like fun. *Benedick*, the man *Beatrice* loves to hate, and vice versa, is captured with ease and great physical humor by Andy Murray. One scene, in which Murray assumes a humble posture in fragmented, sequential movements, is unforgettable. Dan Hiatt places another notch in his actor's belt with his performance as *Leonato*. Hiatt's often cast as a gentleman, albeit one with dark undercurrents, so it's a particular pleasure when he appears in Act II as the dim-witted George Seacole. The trajectory Hiatt must then follow, when he subsequently returns as *Leonato* and goes from proud father to distraught, egocentric man, is no less moving for having played the part of a buffoon only moments before. Nick Childress, Emily Kitchens, Catherine Castellanos and Andrew Hurteau assume their roles with convincing, individual sincerity. Danny Scheie, however, is magnetic. His Act I *Don John*, is elaborately savage. Scheie is able to express more content with a simple "hmm," than most actors convey with extended monologues. Amidst a swirling waltz scene, with the cast filling the stage, Scheie draws the

eye to the top of the stairs, where he stands, surveying the scene with obvious scorn. It's impossible to look away, even if it means missing the boisterous action below. Although Moscone, at an Inside Scoop event, referred to the character of *Dogberry* as an "eek," Scheie makes it all worthwhile. His second act *Dogberry* reveals the cunning joy Shakespeare has with language and sets the audience laughing with guilty pleasure. If anything is reminiscent of the screwball comedies of the 1930's, this is surely it and Scheie is in full command of the role's self-sacrificing humor. The laughter and gaiety at the close of *Much Ado* is a good set-up for next year. The 2011 season will include new versions of Shaw's *Candida* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Joel Sass returns to direct the company's first production of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Rounding out the summer with a musical production inspired by *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is a new play, *The Verona Project*. Shakespeare's romantic comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Jonathan Moscone, plays at Cal Shakes September 12 - October 17. Tickets start at \$20; call (510)548-9666 or go to www.calshakes.org.

Around the World in Two Hours

By Sophie Braccini



The students of the SMC International Club.

Feel like taking a trip around the world on your lunch break? If so, Saint Mary's College is your first stop on Tuesday, October 19. Get to know 20 different countries; sample the foods, enjoy the art and music, and meet the natives - all for free at Global Faire in the Ferroggiaro Quad. An SMC tradition for over 20 years, the Global Faire is organized and staffed by SMC's International Students Club. Proving that SMC is not just a place for Americans and Aussies, most of the Club's 40 or so members come from across the globe - from Asia, Europe, the Middle East, South America and South Africa. "This is an annual opportunity for our students to celebrate their heritage and culture, as well as educate others through the promotion of understanding and unity," says Keith Annis, International Student Coordinator for the Center for International Programs at SMC. "We want to show others what our countries are about, beyond stereotypes," explains Batsaikhan Purevbaatar, an SMC student from Mongolia. Visitors to Purevbaatar's table at the Faire will find him

dressed in Mongolian attire and serving up Mongolian food. Some of the Club's members are US-born but have an interest in discovering other cultures. "I had little exposure and no involvement with non-Americans growing up," said Joe Murphy, an SMC student from Arizona, "I am a member of the club and part of the organizing team because I'm interested in learning and reaching out to different cultures." The Modern Language and Anthropology departments will also tables at the Faire, as will other international clubs such as the Middle Eastern Club and Hermanas Unidas. Music from all over the world will be played and the Women's Resource Center will dance "Rhythm of Change" at around 1:00 p.m. The fair trade non-profit, "Just Hearts" will offer international artifacts for sale. "We are an example of what you get when people from different countries can actually meet and get to know each other," says SMC student Zu Goh, who is from Hong Kong, "we are our own little version of the United Nations; we talk, we listen, we exchange, and

want one day to be active in building a more peaceful world."

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enter the campus, then walk straight toward the center of the college, past the library.

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