## Measure for Measure" at Town Hall Theatre

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By Sophie Braccini



Should it address

Some of the cast of Measure for Measure

production's director, Chris Hayes,

sometimes overlooked play be-sued. But it is still a comedy." The but his methods are insane." cause of its dubious nature as a underlying themes of the play, howcomedy or a drama, Shakespeare's ever, are serious ones. "Measure for Measure" is the new The overarching theme of the

ernment?

who proposed the play to THT's artismoral/sexual behavior? In the play, tic director Clive Worsley, created a most of the moral challenges revolve very lively interpretation of the masaround sex, with the crux of the dyterpiece, supported by a group a namic being the decision of Isabella to place more value in her own virginyoung talent and situated in the nottoo-distant future - a convincing way ity (equated to the salvation of her to shake-off Shakespeare. soul) than to the life of her brother. "Measure for Measure" is a tran-Sex might just be reduced to a lever sitional play for Shakespeare, said of power," said the director. "Justice Hayes during one of the final THT reand power come head to head in this hearsals. "It closes his comedy series play; the character of the Duke has the

production of Lafayette's local troupe, play and Hayes' vision is the concept

Town Hall Theater Company. The of power. "What is the role of gov-

Photos Stu Selland

The dark and complex questions that the characters have to answer are lightened by Shakespeare's comedic tactics. The moments of dramatic soul searching quickly end with the introduction of deception, disguises, cases of mistaken identity, twists and turns with multiple plots, and amus-

ing sub-plots that lighten the mood. The happy ending is a bit ambiguous; the play ends with multiple marriages – or does it? "It's a 'truthcomedy," said Hayes. "There are some dark moments and some light ones. We don't bring comedy into the dark moments, we bring [comedy]

around it."

Hayes, who is also an actor – twice in a "Measure for Measure" production – said that he chose a younger cast to bring a freshness and lightness to the play. "I wanted to have people on the front edge of this experience offering something new," he said. "For example, the character of Lucio is a 'no good' character, and Damien Seteri proposed a very likecompletely relevant and I had never seen before."

During the run-through a few days before opening night, the cast had the play under control, the beautiful language rolling off their tongues, with high energy emanating from the stage.

Joel Roster highlights the self-examination of his character and his complex nature as a menacing and troubled Angelo; Anya Kazimierski plays a bit rigid, yet strong and passionate Isabella, as the role demands; Hayes thought a woman would be great in the role of the older man, Escalus, and Lauren Spencer adds humanity to the duo she forms with Angelo; Steve Rhyne makes the ambiguous Duke Vincentio a very likeable character, although he causes all the turmoil, yet his good-natured efforts to solve everything wins the day; and Clive Worsley plays Pompey with his usual wit and precision, a role that's not central to the intrigue, but pivotal to set the mood on stage.

"I asked Clive to play Pompey so I could go into it knowing that he has a really good grasp of the language," said Hayes, "I wanted to be relaxed knowing that was taken care of."

Overall, "Measure for Measure" is, as its title suggests, a message of tolerance. The play's title comes from a biblical passage (Matthew 7:1-2) which suggests we should not be quick to judge others, because nobody is perfect and everyone is subject to God's judgment - a message definitely relevant today.

"Measure for Measure" runs from May 25 to June 15, with previews on able version of the character that's May 23 and 24. It is rated PG for some suggestive moments. For tickets, call (925) 283-1557 or visit www.TownHallTheatre.com.



Anya Kazimierski (Isabella)

## "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" also at THT



Student-actors rehearsing

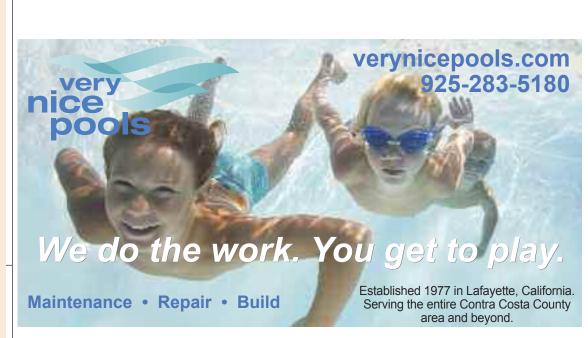
make reservations. S. Braccini

Photo Sophie Braccini

As an interesting counterpoint to "Measure for Measure," Campolindo High School drama students are presenting Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" May 29 and 30 at Town Hall Theatre. The play re-interprets Shakespeare's "Hamlet" from the point of view of two minor characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. This semester the regular program could not take place at Campolindo, so the students took it upon themselves to create the play with no supervision. They call themselves the Ouroborus Players and senior Mina Arasteh was chosen as the director. "I wanted to be in the play, but I was the one with most direction experience since I had been the assistant director of two plays," she said. The students had to find costumes and build their props. "Town Hall Theatre gave us a lot of costumes," said Arasteh. The students have rehearsed four days a week after school and on weekends in other's back yards since February. "We've had a lot of fun and I think we are putting together something really good," said student actor Justin Archangel. Drew Jackson and Kyle Merriman play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, giving the two characters the absurd humor and desperate awkwardness that made the play such an icon of modern theater. On the sidelines, Arasteh gives the final touch. "We will play only twice and it has been an enormous amount of work," says the senior, who will study environmental law next year at UC Davis, "but what counts is the process. Everybody is so talented and we've done something wonderful together." Tickets are \$10 for students and \$15 for adults, and will help the students pay for their costs, including the licensing fee. Visit www.townhalltheatre.com/special-events for more info and to

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