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Two Detroit Natives Play Leading Ladies in *Much Ado About Nothing*
The Hilberry Theatre features Detroit Actors in Shakespearean Comedy

Detroit, MI - On October 28, 2011 the Hilberry Theatre will open its second show of the season, William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Detroit natives Carollette Phillips and Vanessa Sawson will portray, respectively, the love struck and then defamed Hero and the cynical and witty Beatrice. Phillips was last seen in *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*; Sawson was last seen in *The Cider House Rules, Parts 1 and 2*. *Much Ado About Nothing* runs for four weeks until November 19, 2011, including three Tuesday morning matinees.

The 2011-2012 season will mark Phillips' third year with the Hilberry Repertory Company and her final year as an MFA student at Wayne State University. During her time with the company, Phillips has been cast as two other great Shakespearean female protagonists: Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Lady Anne in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Her performance as Hermia was described by *The Detroit News* as "sheer Shakespearean pleasure," and her delivery of the character's dialogue as "articulate, emotionally charged." Her Hermia, the *News* said, "stands apart." Phillips has traveled to New York City to work on such shows as *Saturday Night Live* and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*; has studied in Moscow; and has performed in London, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Phillips continues to be active in her community, teaching dance in Oak Park at her family studio and serving as an acting educator at Mosaic Youth Theatre, University Preparatory Academy Elementary, Teatro Mosaico, Youthville Detroit and the Y-Arts drama program at the Boll Family YMCA in Detroit.

Vanessa Sawson has been involved in community theater from an early age, performing with Stagecrafters in Royal Oak, St. Dunstan's of Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, The Ringwald in Ferndale, Breathe Art in Detroit, Blackbird Theatre in Ann Arbor, The Abreact in Detroit and 1515 Broadway in Detroit as an adult. The Royal Oak native has a B.A. in Theatre Performance from Oakland University in Rochester and has appeared in the Hilberry's productions of *Hay Fever*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Richard III*, *The Misanthrope* and *The Cider House Rules, Parts 1 and 2*.

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Though Hero and Beatrice are loving cousins, the two could not be less alike. Hero is polite, quiet, respectful and gentle; Beatrice is feisty, cynical, witty and sharp. Beatrice keeps up a “merry war” of wits with Benedick in a testament of not settling in marriage (the traditional Renaissance role for a woman). She is a prime example of one of Shakespeare’s strong female characters. She yearns for a way to defend her cousin when Hero is scandalized: “I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.” Although she seldom speaks, Hero is the source of much commotion, even deceiving Beatrice in convincing her that Benedick is in love with her.

Much Ado About Nothing is being promoted with *Twelfth Night* at the Bonstelle Theatre as the “Shakespeare Comedy Package.” Audience members who want to see both productions can save \$10 off the regular price by purchasing the package deal.

The large cast includes Hilberry and Bonstelle company members: **Alec Barbour** (Don Pedro), **Christopher Call** (Antonio), **Danielle Cochrane** (Margaret), **Megan Dobbertin** (Ursula), **Christopher Ellis** (Claudio), **Brent Griffith** (Leonato), **Sara Hymes** (Verges), **Sharayah Johnson** (Sexton), **Zach Johnson** (Watch 2), **Edmund Alyn Jones** (Borachio), **Andrew Papa** (Don John), **Topher Payne** (Balthazar), **Carollette Phillips** (Hero), **Jonathan Pigott** (Watch 1), **Joshua Blake Rippy** (Dogberry), **Vanessa Sawson** (Beatrice), **David Sterritt** (Conrade), **Lorelei Sturm** (Friar Francis) and **Dave Toomey** (Benedick). The production team includes **Matthew Earnest** (Director), **Mercedes Coley** (Production Stage Manager), **Pegi Marshall-Amundsen** (Scenic Designer), **Jessica Van Essen** (Costume Designer), **Michael Thomas** (Sound Designer) and **Jillian Zylinski** (Publicist).

About the Hilberry Theatre Company

The Hilberry Company is unique in that it is the nation's only graduate theatre company staffed by young up-and-coming professionals that also runs on a rotating repertory schedule. About forty graduate students are selected in national competition to receive assistantships to work in this theatre and study for advanced degrees. The company performs an annual season of six plays, including matinees for nearly 6,000 students. Through the years four Hilberry productions have been selected to appear at the American College Theatre Festival.

Tickets are \$12-\$30 and are available by calling the Hilberry Theatre Box Office at (313) 577-2972 or online at www.wsushows.com. The box office is open Tuesday through Saturday from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m., with extended hours to 8 p.m. on performance evenings (Thursday-Saturday). Group discounts and corporate packages are also available. For more information, please call (313) 577-2972 or visit the Wayne State University Box Office at 4743 Cass Avenue on the corner of Hancock in Detroit. Performance information and tickets may also be obtained by visiting the theatre’s website at www.hilberry.com.

The 2011-2012 Hilberry season is sponsored by CBS Outdoor, *Between the Lines* and Encore Michigan.

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Photo #1:



Left to right: Vanessa Sawson, Carollette Phillips

Photo #3:



Vanessa Sawson

Photo #2:



Left to right: Vanessa Sawson, Carollette Phillips

Photo #4:



Carollette Phillips

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Much Ado About Nothing
By William Shakespeare

-Calendar Information-

October 28, 2011 – November 19, 2011

Tuesday 10 a.m. Nov. 1, 8, 15 (Morning Matinees)

Wednesday 2 p.m. Nov. 2 (Postshow Talkback)

Thursday 8 p.m. Nov. 3 (Preshow Discussion), Nov. 10, 17

Friday 8 p.m. Oct. 28 (Opening Night), Nov. 4, 11, 18

Saturday 2 p.m. Oct. 29, Nov. 12

Saturday 8 p.m. Oct. 29, Nov. 5, 12, 19

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