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The Hilberry Theatre Presents A Reimagining of Classical Shakespeare

Internationally Acclaimed Director Makes Much Ado About Nothing Accessible to Modern Audiences

Detroit, MI - On October 28, 2011 the Hilberry Theatre will open its second show of the season, William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Internationally acclaimed visiting director, Matthew Earnest, has reconceived the classical comedy of weddings and wit into a fresh party scene accessible to all ages and lifestyles. "I'm trying to make work that people can jump into and find a place within, be they 18 years old or 80, bus driver or PhD, black or white, gay or straight, rich or poor," says Earnest. In collaboration with scenic designer Pegi Marshall-Amundsen, Earnest is setting this story in front of a lush green garden wall and on top of a bed of gravel, which will provide drainage for the rain that falls onstage during the play. *Much Ado About Nothing* runs for four weeks until November 19, 2011, including three Tuesday morning matinees.

Earnest, who recently co-founded The Lunar Stratagem, an international touring company based out of West Virginia, rejects the notion of traditional Shakespeare being represented by "Renaissance costumes and a mid-century 'classical' acting style imported from the National Theater in London." He explains, "In the larger sweep of theatrical history, I believe that what I'm doing is stylistically much closer to what Shakespeare did at the Globe than what the average American theatergoer encounters." Earnest believes that Shakespeare's themes of metamorphosis and self-discovery are a common human experience, not limited by any time period. As the director for this production, his process will include "working from [my] own heart, mind and experience to realize the piece in three dimensions in a way that will allow the play's questions to be heard and understood by people living in their own moment in history."

One of the major and most obvious differences between Shakespeare's time and today is the technological advances that affect everyday tasks, not to mention theatrical staging. This will be the first time in the Hilberry Theatre's history that rain will be employed as a scenic element. A rain curtain effect utilizes a pump for the water delivery, a series of nozzles on a hose or pipe facilitate the rain effect and drains in the stage floor are used for water collection once the rain hits the ground. Rain is often used in theatre and film as a metaphor for an emotion or transformation a character is experiencing. For example, rain can represent tears, sadness, grief and death, but on the other hand, it can also represent cleansing, purification and rebirth. The design elements for *Much Ado About Nothing* are free from the typical Hilberry restrictions because it will be playing in a straight run and not in rotation with other plays.

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The historic Hilberry Theatre is known for its repertoire of classic plays. The Hilberry Company has previously produced *Much Ado About Nothing* three times, the earliest in the 1970-71 season and most recently in the 1993-94 season. *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 Rippey** (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.

***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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Photo #1:



Left to right: Carollette Phillips as Hero and Christopher Ellis as Claudio

Photo #2:



Top to bottom: Christopher Ellis as Claudio and Carollette Phillips as Hero

Photo #3:



Carollette Phillips as Hero

Photo credits: Patrick Pozezinski

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