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LEGENDARY MAN OF THEATRE REDISCOVERS HAMLET'S WORLD

Phoenix presents collage of Shakespeare's classic tragedy

2011/2012 Season

4 THE MAROWITZ HAMLET

March 15 – 24, 2012

By William Shakespeare & Charles Marowitz

Guest Director Charles Marowitz

Co-Director Fran Gebhard

Set and Lighting Designer Bryan Kenney

Costume Designer Michelle Lo

Stage Manager Denay Amaral

Marowitz rethinks Shakespeare's masterpiece by cutting it up and piecing it back together again.

Imagine if someone were to take Shakespeare's play, cut it up, and piece it back together again so that we, the audience, could experience the masterpiece from a new perspective. This is the life's work of one illustrious man of the theatre, Charles Marowitz, as the Phoenix Theatre presents his collage of Hamlet in *The Marowitz Hamlet*, running March 15 – 24, 2012 at the University of Victoria.

An acclaimed playwright, director and critic who has worked closely with Peter Brook at the Royal Shakespeare Company, on Broadway and in London's West End, Marowitz has notoriously reinterpreted almost a dozen Shakespeare plays over his celebrated career. Students at the Department of Theatre have had the rare opportunity to design for, and rehearse with, this distinguished artist as he directs his own collage of *Hamlet* for Victoria audiences. Unfortunately, this mentoring process had to be cut short as Mr. Marowitz had to return to his home in Los Angeles due to health issues. Faculty member Fran Gebhard, who is also a close friend of Marowitz, is continuing his work. *"I'm confident in the vision that I have shared with the designers over the past year and the actors during these past three weeks. I know that Fran will do a fantastic job leading them the rest of the way,"* says Marowitz.

The Marowitz Hamlet uses the same poetic language as Shakespeare but strives to present a contrasting view of the young Prince's motivations and expose the layers of insanity in his vengeance. *"I despise Hamlet,"* said Marowitz in the introduction to his original 1968 reworking of the play. *"He is a slob, a talker, an analyser, a rationalizer... And how can someone talk so pretty in such a rotten country with the sort of work he's got cut out for him? You may think he's a sensitive, well-spoken fellow, but, frankly, he gives me a pain in the ass."*

In his interpretation, Marowitz re-imagines his cast as caricatures, or icons, from different stylistic influences and time periods – all together in the same setting. Costume Designer and fourth year student Michelle Lo has developed a visual personality for each character – an Ophelia that looks like a doll, a King and Queen that resurrect the image of past South American dictators, and soldiers that reflect both Roman and contemporary army personnel simultaneously. The connotations of these personas, overlaid on the Shakespearean characters, helps communicate Marowitz's interpretation of their motivations and personality. By preserving Shakespeare's language and words in his "collage", Marowitz uses the original text as an equalizer for these different time periods and stylistic influences. The minimalist set, designed by MFA Candidate Bryan Kenney, creates a neutral space that allows for the characters to exist on the same temporal plane rather than representing a specific location. Kenney is also designing the lighting and Denay Amaral is the Stage Manager.

Marowitz is one of the few people to successfully combine drama-criticism, playwriting and a career in stage direction. As well as his work with the Royal Shakespeare Company, he was also the founder and director of The Open Space Theatre in London. His play, *Sherlock's Last Case*, was awarded the Louis B. Mayer Playwriting Award and presented on Broadway in the late 80s starring Frank Langella. His free adaptations of Shakespeare, collected in *The Marowitz Shakespeare*, are performed worldwide. He was the co-founder of *Encore Magazine*, lead critic for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* and a contributor to *The New York Times*, *The London Times*, *Theatre Week* and *American Theatre*. He is currently a regular columnist on swans.com, the Cultural-Political bi-weekly online publication. He has over two dozen books to his credit including *How To Stage A Play*, *Make a Fortune*, *Win a Tony and Become a Theatrical Icon* (Amadeus Books) and *The Other Chekhov*, *Stage Dust: A Critic's Cultural Scrapbook of the 1990s* (Scarecrow Press) and *Roar of the Canon: Kott & Marowitz on Shakespeare* (Applause Books). Marowitz has remounted *The Marowitz Hamlet* several times over his career, including a previous engagement with the Phoenix Theatre in 2003 as a small studio production.

Dr. Michael Best, a professor emeritus in the Department of English and the founder of the Internet Shakespeare Editions (internetshakespeare.uvic.ca) will compare Marowitz's version with the original during a **FREE preshow lecture** on **Friday, March 16 at 7pm**. Everyone is welcome. More play information is available online at phoenixtheatres.ca or by calling **250-721-8000**. The performance schedule for *The Marowitz Hamlet* is as follows:

Public Preview Performances 8pm: March 13 & 14 (Previews \$7.00, available after 5pm)

Evening Performances 8pm: March 15 (Opening Night), 16 (Lecture), 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24

Matinee Performances 2pm: Saturday, March 24

Single Tickets: \$16 Student / \$18 Senior / \$22 Adult / \$24 Weekends @ 8pm

Phoenix Box Office opens March 6 in person or by calling: **(250) 721-8000**.

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