



FROM ROMANS, TO SHAKESPEARE, TO BEYONCÉ

Acclaimed Canadian actor and Shakespeare expert links the Bard to iGeneration through music

2017-18 Season

The Comedy of Errors

March 15 - 24, 2018

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Jeffrey Renn (MFA Candidate)

Music Direction: Wendell Clanton

Set Design: Patrick Du Wors

Costume Design: Jivan Bains-Wood

Lighting Design: Michael Whitfield

Sound Design: Aidan Dunsmuir

Choreography: Christina Penhale

Stage Manager: Brendan Agnew

Mystery and mayhem are at the heart of this pop musical reboot of Shakespeare's shortest and funniest comedy that features a pair of twins – twice! Years after they were separated at birth, the twins find themselves swept up in Mardi Gras celebrations and everyone gets mistaken for everyone else. This 16th-century farce will have you asking the eternal question, "Who am I?" – while dancing in the aisles!

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Shakespeare's funniest comedy is getting a reboot for the digital age. Director and self-professed Shakespeare nerd, Jeffrey Renn finds inspiration from pop music videos to revamp the 16th-century farce, **The Comedy of Errors**, on his mission to share the Bard with the current iTunes generation. Integrating Shakespeare's lines into music from Nina Simone to Beyoncé, from Queen to Justin Timberlake, this pop musical version of **The Comedy of Errors** (complete with contemporary choreography), runs March 15-24, 2018 at UVic's Phoenix Theatre.

The Comedy of Errors is a hilarious, intricately-entangled farce of mistaken identity that was first told in Roman times. It tells the story of two sets of twins, separated at birth, who find themselves in the same city... and coincidentally, also have the same name. As their two worlds collide, chaos ensues, resolving into a tale of family reunion, love, and self-reflection.

Director Jeffrey Renn intermixes Shakespearean verse with the lyrics of popular music in his almost Broadway-esque adaptation. Renn isn't new to acting, directing, or reinterpreting the Bard. From Stratford to Broadway, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts alumnus has performed Shakespeare across the continent. "I have been blessed to work with rare artistic genius when it comes to Shakespeare," Renn said, "including the legendary Robin Phillips," (the Artistic Director that put the Stratford Festival on the map, who sadly passed away in 2015). With many years of experience already under his belt, Renn chose to complete a Masters in Directing at UVic so that he can share his knowledge teaching young actors, and excite them about the vital world of Shakespeare's work and what it still offers them today.

"We're adapting Shakespeare's adaptation of Plautus Menaechmi, a play that is almost two thousand years old," said Renn, "proving that our basic humanity really hasn't changed since Roman times. We might live differently, technologically, but we're still the same. We still have our human foibles, and we're still really funny. Young people are still searching for a sense of meaning, a sense of recognition, only now it's performative – captured and viewed through our devices. This play holds up a mirror and asks the question "Who am I?" I wanted to change the play's context to help students see themselves through Shakespeare's words, to have fun, and make it theirs."

An exceptional creative team brings both youthful energy and expertise to create the modern-day Mardi Gras party atmosphere into which Renn sets this unique adaptation. To ensure the authentic sound of youth culture, fourth-year student Aidan Dunsmuir fills the auditorium with his energetic sound design. Popular UVic professor, Wendell Clanton provides musical direction and augments the vibes with talents from the Department of Music. Christina Penhale, of Salt Spring Island's exitStageLeft, frames the show with contemporary choreography that sweeps the cast on a farcical journey of laughter that will literally have you dancing in the aisles. Design professor Patrick Du Wors' set portrays the themes of whimsy and reflection by using mirrors as a basis for a timeless and minimalist universe that is invaded by a raucous romp. Student costume designer Jivan Bains-Wood highlights the fun and extravagance of the adaptation with colourful outfits, plenty of glitter, Mardi Gras beads and glow-in-the-dark costume pieces. Lighting designer Michael Whitfield punctuates the fast-paced farce with punchy and energetic club lighting, and Brendan Agnew returns to the mainstage as stage manager.

The public is encouraged to join us for our free **Preshow Lecture, Friday, March 16 at 7pm** with director Jeffrey Renn to discuss how he has successfully created contemporary Shakespearean adaptations in the past.

Performances are as follows:

Public Previews @8pm: Tuesday and Wednesday, March 13 & 14

Evenings @8pm: (Monday - Saturday) March 15 (opening), 16 (lecture), 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24

Matinees @2pm: Saturdays, March 17 & 24

Preshow Lecture @7pm: Friday, March 16

Tickets: Weekdays & Matinees: \$16 Student, \$21 Senior, \$26 Adult | Weekend Evenings: All seats \$26 (Previews: \$8.00 only after 5pm on day of performance)

Phoenix Box Office Opens: March 6 for sales in person, or by phone at (250) 721-8000.

Open Monday through Saturday from 12:00pm to 8:30pm