

A modern version of Shakespeare's play about the politics of war kicks off University theater season

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

There are certain universal elements that don't change over time. Robert Barton realized political maneuvering is one of them as he began contemplating his next Shakespeare directorial stint.

The theater arts professor decided that "Julius Caesar," with its focus on ambition and the politics of war, is a timeless classic that would work in many different settings. That's why the play can so easily be done in a current time-frame, Barton said.

Kicking off Robinson Theatre's 50th anniversary season on Nov. 5, "Julius Caesar" will be produced in modern dress with a streamlined version of Shakespeare's language. While the play will examine the way a country selects those who govern, Barton said, it will also be a contemporary look at our own election process, just as the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign picks up steam.

Barton has also cast many of the politicians and soldiers previously played by men with women. The original

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transcending time

script actually calls for only two women roles.

The six newly-elected female officials in Arizona influenced Barton's decision to change the sexes of some of the characters. The role-reversal is not only an acceptable thing to do on a politically active campus, he pointed out, but accurately reflects the societal landscape of modern times.

The director also cut out sixteen characters from the original version and all but five actors in this production are being asked to play two roles. Shakespeare's version is filled with countless characters that don't make a substantial contribution to its content, Barton said.

Barton's credentials for directing Shakespeare are plentiful. As a professional, he acted in most of Shakespeare's plays and then went on to direct fourteen or fifteen more, including "Two Gentlemen of Verona" at the University in 1998.

The mounting of the play received a grant from the American College Theatre that allowed the cast to tour throughout Oregon the same year. The production also won an unprecedented nine awards from the American College Theatre Festival during its venture.

"Two Gentlemen of Verona" will be rebuilt on this campus Feb. 2000.

Robinson Theatre's season is decided

by a selection committee made up of both faculty and graduate and undergraduate student representatives. They try to "alternate musicals with Shakespeare plays every other year," said Joseph Gilg, development director for the theater arts department.

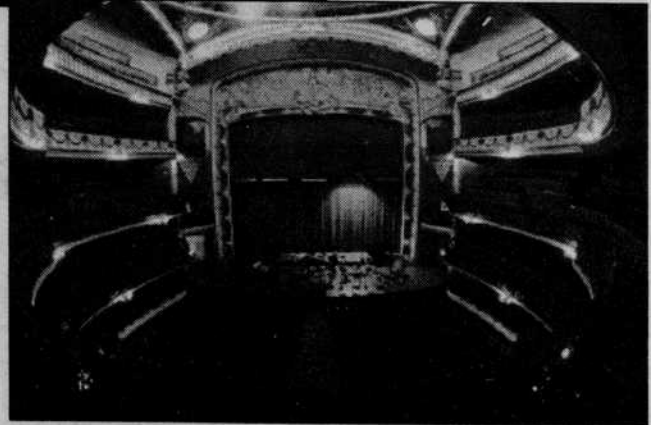
As a general rule, Gilg noted, the committee tries to keep a broad spectrum of time and place over the course of four years so students can get the greatest eclectic, educational experience at the University as possible.

"Julius Caesar" opens Friday night with an 8 p.m. performance. Other evening performances are Nov. 6, Nov. 11-13 and Nov. 19-20. There is a 2 p.m. matinee Nov. 14.

Tickets are \$10 for the general public; \$8 for senior citizens, University faculty and staff, and non-University students; and \$5 for University students. On Nov. 11, University students can purchase tickets for \$4. Tickets can be purchased at the Hult Center, the EMU and the Robinson Theatre box offices.

For the Nov. 14 matinee, tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students through the Camp Fire Boys and Girls, as a benefit for that organization. Call 342-6338 for information on tickets for that performance.

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