



Danielle Kardum and Margie Kment will perform in "Ophelia's Mother," opening at the Robinson Theatre on Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Lauren Wimer
Photographer

Playwrights win reading of work

The new play, 'Ophelia's Mother,' will have its first reading this Friday at 7:30 p.m. in Robinson Theatre

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

Reinterpreting William Shakespeare has been a cornerstone of Western theater for much of the post-modern era. From the existentialist comedies of Tom Stoppard to the multitude of modernized adaptations, reworking themes and characters that are nearly 500 years old has proved to be a fruitful endeavor for artists.

Now, the University Department of Theatre Arts is about to add another addition to this history of interpretation with the new work "Ophelia's Mother."

The new play, which will receive a reading Friday night in the Robinson Theatre at 7:30, was chosen as part of the theatre art's department's new First Flights program, which is a meant to give new, unproduced plays a chance to receive reading and, eventually, full productions.

"Ophelia's Mother" was chosen out of 79 submissions from around the country, said Jeffrey Mason, the head of the Department of Theatre Arts.

"This department has a history of doing new works," Mason said. "Things like Jon Schmor's 'This Ship of Fools' production and the New Voices program are good examples. Now, we're looking to bring this together and make it something the department is known for."

The play, written by Suzanne Kehde and Jean Pickering, takes Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and tells it from the eyes of the title character, Eleanor.

Integrating major scenes from the original play, the new piece deals with the issue of whether or not Eleanor will assert her birthright and claim the throne of Denmark.

"The play offers a great opportunity for the actresses," director and theatre arts graduate student Jennifer Thomas said. "It tells the story from their perspective."

Cast member and junior theatre arts major Danielle Kardum, who plays Eleanor, had similar sentiments. "I'm excited to read this role," Kardum said. "The role of Eleanor is challenging. She's a strong woman full of wit and integrity."

Along with the reading of the play, the audience also will be treated to a discussion afterward where they can ask questions of the playwrights, director and cast. While "Ophelia's Mother" will only be receiving a reading at this point, Mason said the First Flights program will eventually be a forum for complete performance of unproduced works, though no productions have been scheduled yet. The program does have another reading scheduled though, Carlos Morton's "Brown Baby," which will be read June 1.

Submissions for the First Flights program can be sent to the Department of Theatre Arts between October and May. All submissions must be unproduced and written in standard stage playwriting style. More information about the submission process can be found through the program's Web site, <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Etdad/ep/FirstFlights/>.

The reading of "Ophelia's Mother" is free and open to the public.

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailyemerald.com.

SHAKRA

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one identifies him or herself as a "woman" or a "man" is something externally imposed, internalized within and taken as unquestionable truth. Without any critical examination, we never discover that these behaviors are actually learned. Women learn to be women and men learn to be men, Ani DiFranco once said.

This says nothing about biological sex. While there are certain biological facts that distinguish human beings from one another, these facts do not conform to a dichotomous system either. Feminist biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling has noted that the idea of there being only two sexes is yet another gendered social construction — if we consider hermaphrodites, there should be five sexes: Males, females, those with biological sex characteristics of both males and females and two variations of hermaphrodites with either more female or male characteristics.

There is no "us versus them." It doesn't exist. Yet, we rely upon it and we learn to conform to it. Deviation from the status quo, or the culturally imposed set of norms, while often not

specifically illegal, is discouraged in a variety of ways. Our parents keep us in check. Our friends keep us in check. The media keep us in check. We keep ourselves in check. Ad nauseam.

And few wish to deal with the stigma of dissent. Nowhere is this more apparent than when it comes to how we express ourselves with our bodies. Any androgyny causes confusion. We get uncomfortable when we can't tell whether someone is a girl or a guy. This is because androgyny contradicts our learned dualistic relationships to the world.

As I walked home later in the day, I found the following words spray-painted on the concrete: "Their laws are our demise." It should be said that the "they" exists within us as much as it does outside of us.

The first place to fight this conformity is with our bodies. Stop subscribing to this culturally imposed gendered social control. Our bodies are the site of direct action — it's time to begin. It's time to sing these songs of dissent.

To be continued.

Contact the Pulse editor at aaronshakra@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

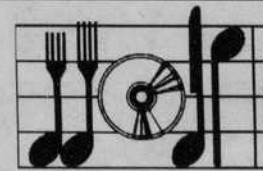
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