

Arts

Concordia Theatre Begins the New Season with The Odd Couple



Concordia University's Fall production of *THE ODD COUPLE*. Pictured from left to right: Tim Winterstein, Jamin Becker, Phillip Kennedy, Jonathan Ndukewe, Nick Schmitt, Paul Bentley

Concordia University Theater will begin its 2000-2001 season with productions of both the male and female versions of Neil Simon's classic American comedy, *The Odd Couple*. Each cast will perform on alternating nights starting with the male cast on November 3 at 8 p.m. The show continues November

4, 5, 10, 11 and 12. All shows begin at 8 p.m. except the two Sunday matinees Nov. 5 and 11, which begins at 2 p.m. All performances will be held at the Fine Arts Building on the Concordia Campus (NE 27th and Holman). Tickets will be \$5 for students/seniors and \$7 for the general public. For more infor-

mation or for ticket reservation, please call 503/280-8614. Scott Thurman will direct the *Odd Couple* and is excited about the talented new faces in the theater department this year. "Most of the cast is young, but this year we are blessed with a tremendous amount of new talent. These students have terrific energy and enthusiasm, and this show's great fun." Concordia will present the medieval mystery play *The Second Shepherds Play* in December. Work has already begun for the spring musical *The Children of Eden*. "We are making a lot of positive changes this year," Thurman says. "We're improving the building, expanding the theater program, and reaching out to a wider audience. We have a lot to look forward to this year."

Shakespeare meets Bladerunner in Otello

Shakespeare meets *Bladerunner* in this unique twist on Verdi's dark classic, *Otello*. Performances of *Otello* will be on Nov. 4, 6, 8 and 11 at the Portland Opera, located at 1515 SW Morrison.

Staged by Portland Opera's General Director Robert Bailey, with sets and costumes by acclaimed Viennese designer Walter Schwab, this all-new Portland Opera production offers a daring, unconventional vision of a world set apart in time.

With a libretto based on Shakespeare's play, *Otello* tells the story of a Moorish war hero who falls prey to jealousy and self-doubt. Stationed on the remote island outpost of Cyprus with his new bride Desdemona, Otello doesn't suspect that his right-hand man Iago is plotting to undermine him. Desdemona is virtuous, but Iago persuades Otello that she is unfaithful. Verdi's soaring, impassioned score propels the tragedy of a great man who will

ultimately destroy that which he loves most.

Written when Verdi was in his 70s, *Otello* represents one of his greatest achievements. The freshness of the score and the dramatic depths of the principal characters reflect a milestone in the history of opera. In creating this new production, Bailey chose an innovative approach that would reflect Verdi's own unique contribution to the repertoire.

"Just as Verdi discarded the trappings of traditional operatic forms, so we have tried to avoid old-fashioned notions of pomp and spectacle," said Bailey. "We have striven to bring out the timeless nature of Shakespeare's play and the psychological issues that are clearly as relevant today as they were 400 years ago."

Schwab's striking set and costumes blend both innovative and classical elements to suggest a mythic world not tied to a particular

time or place.

Schwab, who collaborated with Bailey on the award-winning American premiere of *The Merchant of Venice* several seasons ago, describes his designs as "imaginative and expressionistic with strong contemporary notion." Dark costumes splashed with metallic trim gleam against the backdrop of a machine-like set, while huge mirrors hang suspended above the stage.

The mirrors are a crucial component of the design, explains Schwab, because they literally reflect the psychological states of the characters as well as the "shaky ground" on which the community stands. The unusual set presented special challenges for veteran lighting designer Barry Steele who collaborated closely with Schwab to create lighting that corresponds with both the music and the emotional states of the characters.

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