

Shakespeare with a touch of Salsa

Cottage Theatre sets '12th Night' in 1950s Cuba

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cuba instead of Illyria; rum and salsa instead of wine and galliards — these are but a few of the modifications that the Cottage Theatre made to adapt the 17th-century Shakespearean comedy "12th Night" for a 1950s Havana night club.

"It's common practice to stage Shakespeare in a different time and place because it has a universal quality," said Executive Director Susan Goes. "But we decided on Cuba years ago. So, while we are very fortunate that Cuba has been in the news, it was merely a coincidence."

The Cottage Theatre hit the current-events jackpot when President Barack Obama announced significantly relaxed restrictions on travel by Americans to Cuba just weeks before the opening of "12th Night."

However, even if the news has teed up a successful run for the Cottage Theatre, director Tony Rust said that he and his team felt no added pressure to hit it out of the park.

"Ultimately, we're just silly — regardless of what's going on," he said.

And they are silly indeed. The cast, which also includes Rust in the role of Feste, leads the audience through a farce of mistaken identities and cultural faux pas, and ultimately to a resolution that leaves all but a few characters happily paired up.

Rust — who has staged "12th Night" in a variety of different settings during his career — said there was higher degree of difficulty in developing the range of accents than bringing the unique setting to life.

"We started with just the Cuban accent and the Don's, but soon realized that we needed Viola and Sebastian to be from somewhere else because there weren't enough outsiders," he said.

In this production, Tracy Nygard and Randall Brous play Viola and Sebastian — two shipwrecked and separated siblings from Charleston. Nygard and Brous demonstrate expert fluencies in Southern Shakespeare — a feat that betrays the already-challenging task of articulating Elizabethan English.

"With or without an accent, enunciation and volume are very important," Rust said. "On the other hand though, the language flows really nicely with an accent — better than it would with an American non-accent."

While it can be difficult for an audience to follow the lines of Shakespeare, the cast transcends the language with pinpoint inflection and expressive body language. Dale Flynn and Mark Anderson, in their respective roles of Uncle Toby and Andrew, certainly let the audience know when an innuendo or double entendre is in play.

"We work really hard to make what we're thinking clear," Rust said.

Another unique twist on this play is the live band of Jim Reinking on drums and Chris King on piano. And while a nightclub vibe may not be synonymous with Shakespeare, Rust believes that music is an essential element.

"Most of his comedies are almost proto-musicals. The plot of this play — not necessarily of mistaken identity but as a romantic comedy — is the kind that we end up with in musical comedies. So, having good music is something that we started with."

The band impresses with three original songs, and the salsa-style music drives the transition between scenes, creating a breathless pace that reflects



Tracy Nygard and Randall Brous — as Viola and Sebastian, respectively — laed an ensamble cast in Cottage Theatre's production of '12th Night.'

courtesy photo

the disorder among the characters.

In addition to acting and directing, Rust also designed the set. He has at times worn multiple hats during a production, but while Rust said that it limited his opportunities to observe through the director's lens, it had no impact on his style.

"I make my actors be independent, so that didn't change. I want the char-

acters to come from their hearts and their ideas," he said.

"12th Night" continues for two more weeks. Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows begin at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinees start at 2:30 p.m. The Thursday evening performances are new for the 2015 season.

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CLAUSE

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In his remarks, Head Football Coach Gary Roberts wished that a drug-testing policy was enforced on his high-school teams. Not only would they have been more successful, but also he is convinced that his teammates — several who now deal with drug addiction — would have gone on to be successful, contributing members of society.

At the conclusion of public comment, the school board extended its appreciation for the commentary and acknowledged

that it has been a challenging issue. However, the board opted to stick to its original plan to revisit the policy after one year rather than adopt the opt-out clause after just six months.

The drug testing policy (also known as JFCIA-AR), which was adopted this past August, says that each student wishing to participate in athletics and/or extracurricular activities and the student's parents shall consent in writing to drug testing; participation is not allowed without this consent.

All participants may be tested at the beginning of an athletic or

extracurricular season. In addition, the superintendent will administer random testing.

Samples are to be collected at a mutually convenient time on the same day the student is selected for testing. Students who refuse to provide a sample will be considered to have tested positive and are subject. The chosen laboratory will test for one or more illegal or performance-enhancing drugs — chosen by the superintendent

In the event of a positive test, the student or parent may request within 48 hours that a second specimen be tested. If

BOND

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the rate on that bond will drop significantly in 2017, and Parent explained that, if passed, a bond to replace Harrison could take effect in conjunction with that rate drop, meaning that local taxpayers wouldn't see a resultant increase in their property taxes.

Parent said that a strong economy and the rate decrease on the current bond have the District

targeting either the May or November 2016 election in which to put the issue before voters. The bond advisory committee is expected to give a recommendation on a possible bond to the School Board at its May 4 meeting; the committee will tour Harrison Elementary with the School Board on March 16.

Much discussion has already involved (and will likely continue to involve) the possibility of broadening the goals of a bond

from replacing Harrison School to making other upgrades in the District. Parent stated that the security systems at many schools are lacking.

"I think we really have to consider it as part of the bond," she said. In addition, it is believed by many that improvements such as the replacement of the Warren H. Daugherty Aquatic Center (with a price tag of about \$7 million) could not be accomplished without a bond; in

NED

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what could be your last meal."

Though the study was unable to determine exactly how much a person's life span is shortened by sitting, statistics suggest the earlier in our lives that we begin sitting, the quicker our demise.

As one researcher put it, "Let's just say, if you ever sat in a high chair or let someone pull you around in a wagon as a child, you're lucky to still be alive."

The study has drawn plenty of fire, including from Furniture Manufacturers Union leader Chaise Ottoman, who said a lawsuit has already been filed by a man who says his La-Z-Boy has taken years off of his life since getting a DIRECTV sports bundle.

"What's next? A national recall on chairs and couches?"

Ottoman said. "Obviously, we don't plan on taking this sitting down. Not that we're afraid of sitting down..."

Even the automobile industry, anticipating a dramatic drop in luxury car sales, has begun redesigning its vehicles to allow occupants to stand rather than sit. The first of these new vehicles, the Ford Chariot, is expected to roll into dealerships this spring.

"Whether buyers prefer something sporty or a family vehicle with room for as many as 11 standing passengers, our new Chariot is the healthy choice," said a Ford executive, who then plugged the company's new slogan: "Your Chariot awaits."

Though Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has yet to weigh in on the report's findings, rumors of a mandatory warning label informing consumers of the

health risk associated with sitting have already begun to circulate. Being referred to as the "Let's Not Stand for Sitting" labeling initiative, insiders say the warning would be required on anything that promotes the unhealthy habit of sitting.

While no official statement has been released by the Surgeon General, he did open a recent press conference by saying, "Thanks for coming, everyone. Please have a seat. NO! WAIT!"

What kind of repercussions the report could have on the future remains unclear as lawmakers, health officials and human rights groups wrestle over the implications of a standing-only society.

In a recent poll, most people would prefer to just sit this one out.

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