

A twist on 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona'

See the show May 13-14 at BMCC in Pendleton

By Jennifer Colton
Go! Magazine

PENDLETON — "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" will come to the stage in Pendleton on May 13-14 with a lively cast of Shakespearean characters people may not be familiar with.

In this version of "Two Gentlemen," the titular gentlemen won't be played by men at all. Abby Hale will play Valentine, the young man who leaves for Milan with his servant, Speed, and sets the action in motion. Carly Elder is Proteus, Valentine's best friend, who joins Valentine in Milan, along with his servant, Launce. With Valentine and Proteus reunited, hijinks ensue involving overlapping love triangles, disguises and a band of outlaws.

"This play is quite charming and quite funny," director Grant Turner said.

Launce and Speed are not "the" two gentlemen of Verona, but the servant duo — and Launce's dog, Crab — steal parts of the show.

"The interactions between the characters, the subtle jokes, those are some of the most golden parts of this show," said Chris Dennett, who plays Launce. "My favorite part so far is getting to do prop comedy. To find prop comedy in a Shakespeare play where I didn't know that existed before has been a lot of fun. The more and more I read Launce, I said, 'This is a funny, funny part, and I'm really going to like doing this.'"

The prop comedy of Launce — including a shoe, a cane and, yes, a live animal on stage — contrasts with the witty Speed, played by Christian Quinlin.

"My favorite part of this character is that he's supposedly the smartest character — and he believes he is — but he is also somewhat of a smart-ass the whole time. He's quick-witted and very fun to play out," Quinlin said.

Turner said although the play was written in the late 1500s, the characters, themes and the humor are still relatable.

"I always look forward to the idea of introducing an audience who think they're going to hate this stuff to a new experience," Turner said. "It's our job as ac-



Jennifer Colton/Go Magazine
Launce (Chris Dennett), left, and Speed (Christian Quinlin) rehearse "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," which will be presented May 13 and 14 in Pendleton.

tors to understand what these 500-year-old jokes mean and communicate them in a way the audience will understand. I al-

ways look forward to that challenge."

Ellen Paulson plays Julia and said she was afraid she would

struggle with the language but quickly understood the story in the first reading.

"The characters are so relatable," she said. "Everyone has a Proteus and everyone has a Lucetta in their lives. In a way we're still dealing with the same things."

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona" is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. May 13 and May 14 at the Bob Clapp Theater on the campus of Blue Mountain Community College, 2411 NW Carden. Tickets are \$18 on elginopera-house.com.

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona" will also be presented in June as part of the Opera House Shakespeare Festival in Elgin.

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