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ON STAGE

"The Little Choo-Choo That Thinks She Can" (production for children), through Oct. 27, Indiana Repertory Theatre, 140 W. Washington St., Indianapolis; irtlive.com

"Guess Who's Coming To Dinner," through Oct. 27, Carmel Community Players, The CAT, 254 Veterans Way, Carmel; carmelplayers.org

"And So We Walked: An Artist's Journey Along the Trail of Tears," through Nov. 10, Indiana Repertory Theatre, 140 W. Washington St., Indianapolis; irtlive.com

"The Brothers Paranormal," through Nov. 10, Fonseca Theatre, 2508 W. Michigan St., Indianapolis; fonsecatheatre.org

"Little Shop of Horrors," through Nov. 18, Beef & Boards Dinner Theatre, 9301 N. Michigan Road; beefandboards.com

OPENING

"Vino Veritas," Oct. 24-Nov. 24, Phoenix Theatre, 705 N. Illinois St., Indianapolis; phoenixtheatre.org

SHOWTIME CHANGE AT PHOENIX

Saturday performances on the Basile (secondary, black box) Stage at the Phoenix Theatre will be held at 2:30 p.m. with no evening show. Other performance times have not changed. Also, there will be no Oct. 26 performance of "Vino Veritas" due to the Boo-Ha-Ha fundraiser event.

"Seven Deadly Sins and Other Tales," Oct. 25-26, Gregory Hancock Dance Theatre at the Tarkington, Center for the Performing Arts, Carmel; gregoryhancockdancetheatre.org

"Alabama Story," Oct. 25- Nov. 17, Actors Theatre of Indiana, The Studio Theater, 4 Center Green, Carmel; www.atistage.org

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John Lyle Belden and Wendy Carson

Theatre Bulletin

Indianapolis & Central Indiana **FREE** No. 0013 – October 24, 2019

BARD FEST: THE REVIEWS

The fifth annual **Bard Fest**, Indianapolis' Shakespeare festival, runs through Sunday with performances at the IndyFringe theater and the District Theatre on Massachusetts Ave. Get information and tickets at indybardfest.com.

Edited; see full reviews online at www.playswithjohnandwendy.com

Full 'Hamlet' enriches familiar story

By now we all know the story of "Hamlet." It's one of Shakespeare's most produced plays and you've likely seen more than one version of it. However, Doug Powers and the Carmel Theatre Company have chosen to give us a different take by giving us an almost entirely unabridged look at the play.

Before you balk at the 3-plus hour running length (with intermission), note that with these rarely acted scenes returned to the story, it just deepens the richness of the characters. It also brings the secondary plot forward (remember Norway?) bringing more closure and purpose to many of the characters.

Also, the starkness of the stage and minimalist set pieces help remind you that this show is about listening to and understanding the characters. In order to fulfill this task, one must have great actors and Powers has outdone himself in procuring them.

Brian G. Hartz sizzles as Hamlet, pulling forth all of the rage and deviousness that the character embodies. Miranda Nehrig turns Ophelia into a young woman whose confusion and frustrations over Hamlet's behavior help lead her to her desperate end. Both have skill in communicating beyond saying the lines, especially Nehrig's talent for adding volumes with a single facial expression.

Eric Bryant as Claudius and Jean Arnold as Gertrude present the quintessential parents who are bewildered as to why their son has so quickly changed his demeanor. Their recent nuptials so soon after the previous King's untimely death never cross their mind as a possible reason.

While most of the Bard Fest offerings have cast women in several men's roles, Powers uses his casting choices to their maximum effect. Jo Bennett plays Horatio as a dear friend but in later scenes there seems to be romantic tension, which they pull off with great aplomb.

However, the best example of this is with the character of Guildenstern, played by Gorgi Parks Fulper. Instructed to play upon her history with Hamlet to obtain information, she is asked to use her feminine wiles. Meanwhile, Benjamin Mathis plays Rosencrantz as the perfect second banana who seems to always be left out of the whole scheme.

Alan Cloe is perfect as wise but tragic Polonius. Noah Winston is a fiery force as his son, Laertes.

Casting is also clever in its players with two or more roles: Fulper and Mathis also play palace guards in the opening scene. Janice Hibbard is the messenger to Norway, and later is that country's warrior princess Fortinbras. The ghost of murdered King Hamlet (the title character's dad) is portrayed by Tony Armstrong, who also plays an identical character in the play-within-the-play that Hamlet (the younger) sets up to watch his stepfather's reaction; later Armstrong is the gravedigger who unearths Yorick's skull.

In addition, kudos to Rachel Snyder and Kyrsten Lyster as members of the traveling troupe of Players.

Remaining performances are 7:30 p.m. Friday, 7:30 Saturday (with talkback following) and 1 p.m. Sunday (Oct. 25-27) at the IndyFringe Theatre.

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Bard Fest Reviews, continued

Trauma has woman caught in ‘Lear’s Shadow’

For many of the people we know, theatre is life. Sometimes it feels like the two blend together, and in **“Lear’s Shadow,”** by Brian Elerding, the words of a William Shakespeare drama can help one to deal with a real-world truth.

Jackie (Nan Macy) arrives at her company’s rehearsal room to find it empty and the wrong scripts on the table. She has unexplained bruises and a sore neck, but her main concern is that no one is there to start working on Shakespeare’s “King Lear.”

Then, company member Stephen (Tom Weingartner) arrives, visibly worried. He calls Rachel (Morgan Morton), who is on her way, but in the meantime he needs to keep Jackie occupied, working through her frequent mental re-sets until she is ready to understand...

For much of the hour of this First Folio production in the Indy-Fringe Indy Eleven Theatre, Jackie and Stephen explore the idea of following just the plot of the King in “Lear,” apart from other intrigues, exploring his relationships and growing madness. Thus many passages from the play are quoted and enacted, leading up to Act IV, Scene 7. Macy is incredible, both as Jackie and as Jackie-as-Lear, as we come to learn the parallels between the two — picking favorites, pushing away a loved one, psychological trauma, and the need to rage against something that can’t be controlled.

Remaining performances are Oct. 24-27: 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday (with talkback after Friday’s show) and 2 p.m. Sunday.

From fun with Falstaff to hostilities with Hotspur

While we can heartily recommend any of this year’s Bard Fest shows, the one that has the most elements of Shakespeare’s storytelling is “Henry IV, Part 1,” presented by First Folio and directed by Glenn L. Dobbs. It combines comedy, drama, adventure, and a bit of actual British history in a rather entertaining package.

It is a story of the misspent youth of “Bonny Prince Hal” (Matthew Walls), the man who would eventually become the legendary King Henry V, as well as the struggle by his father, Henry IV (Abdul

Hakim-Shabazz), to maintain a united kingdom.

Hal has his fun with best friend Ned Poins (John Mortell) as they jest with famed drunkard Sir John Falstaff (Matthew Socey) and his minions, cowardly Bardolf (Jonathen Scoble) and berserker Peto (Missy Rump). Meanwhile, the King has to deal with a plot led by Henry Percy (Matt Anderson), known as Hotspur for his fiery temper, aided by relatives Worcester (Sara Castillo Dandurand) and Mortimer (Eric Mannweiler), the Scottish Earl of

Agape work their magic in terrific ‘Tempest’

“The Tempest” may be as close as Shakespeare came to what we now classify as sci-fi/fantasy. In its world, magic is assumed, without giving much backstory of how exiled Italian nobleman Prospero came to own the spellbook, staff, and skills to use them, on an island near Scotland with the hideous Caliban and beautiful faerie Ariel. All this and more we get in an excellent production by Agape Performing Arts Company.

Evan Wolfgang plays Prospero as a noble father who has a bold plan and the drive to see it through. He sees an opportunity for revenge, as the men who wronged him are on the open sea, and with a teleport spell and the ability of Ariel (Audrey Duprey) to call up and control a storm, brings them to his shore.

The tempest of the title is wonderfully portrayed with brilliant use of costume and movement. The boat rocks, the waves surge, and the crew cry out in barely contained panic. But all arrive safely, scattered by Prospero’s spell in accordance with his plans.

The cast includes Grant Scott Miller as Prince Ferdinand, who falls in love with Prospero’s daughter Miranda (Laura Sickmeier); Matthias Neidenberger, Gilead Rea-Hedrick, Kathryn Rose and Nathan Ellenberger as the men who had wronged Prospero; and in brilliant comedy relief, Kennath Cassaday as jester Trinculo and Maura Phipps as drunken butler Stephano, who encounter Caliban (Aidan Morris).

See all set right with a spirit of redemption and forgiveness, in a most entertaining fashion on the District Theatre main stage. Remaining performances are 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday and 5 p.m. Sunday.

Douglas (Andy Burnett), and Welsh rebel Glendower (David Mosedale). On Henry’s side stand Sir Walter Blunt (Eli Robinson), Lord Westmoreland (Brian Kennedy), and eventually Hal, having sworn off his prior foolishness.

Our cast inhabit the roles naturally. Also notable are Afton Shepard as Percy’s bitter wife, and Michelle Wafford as the in-charge Hostess of the Boar’s Head Tavern.

Remaining performances are 8 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Saturday (with talkback after) and 1 p.m. Sunday at the District Theatre.