

CLASSICAL · ACTORS · ENSEMBLE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS IMAGE (available mid-October): www.classicalactorsensemble.org/press.htm

Classical Actors Ensemble to present female-focused repertory

Minneapolis, MN – Classical Actors Ensemble (CAE), the Twin Cities' theater company exclusively dedicated to English Renaissance drama, will stage a repertory of two thematically related plays with one cast later this autumn. Thomas Middleton's "Women Beware Women" and Shakespeare's "Measure For Measure" will run Nov. 30 through Dec. 23 at the Gremlin Theatre. Both plays feature complex female characters who find (and take) power in powerless situations; comedic highlights set against very dark, dramatic worlds; and an exploration of sexual politics demonstrating significant similarities between the Jacobean era and our own

The strikingly titled, "Women Beware Women", is a revenge tragedy about the dangers of lust, the abuse of power, and what can follow a "happily ever after" ending. Gary Taylor, co-editor of the Oxford Shakespeare, has called it "Romeo and Juliet for grown-ups." Leantio, a young clerk, has secretly eloped with the beautiful Bianca, the daughter of a wealthy and powerful Venetian family. For fear of her family's retribution, he keeps her hidden away at his mother's house in Florence while he travels for his job. When she is spied from the street by the Duke of Florence and becomes the object of his romantic attentions, Leantio's shallow plan to keep her secreted disintegrates into a bloodbath of jealousy. As with most Jacobean plays, there are several intertwined plotlines; the title represents the actions of several female characters who, acting in their own self-interest, undermine and betray each other. Very rarely staged in the U.S., this will be the Twin Cities premiere, and will be directed by Artistic Director, Joseph Papke.

With a mission to produce fifty percent Shakespeare and fifty percent the other playwrights of the era, CAE is excited to stage our third play by Thomas Middleton (1580-1627). Middleton is the only other Renaissance playwright to create acknowledged masterpieces in the genres of comedy, tragedy, and history. His 1624 play, "A Game at Chess", was the greatest box-office hit of early modern London, playing for nine days straight (an unheard of feat at the time, when productions changed daily). A freelance writer, he also wrote masques, pageants, pamphlets, epigrams, and commentaries and was named Chronologer of the City of London in 1620. He is also credited with collaborating with Shakespeare on "Timon of Athens", and with revising both "Macbeth" and "Measure For Measure" for Shakespeare's company, the King's Men, after Shakespeare's death.

Shakespeare's "Measure For Measure" is about the ethics of power, justice, and mercy. Its title comes from the biblical Sermon on the Mount: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." At the center of its plot, a man in a position of power attempts to coerce sex from a woman when she comes to him seeking help in saving her brother's life. The play raises questions such as: what role should a government take in legislating morality? What matters more when law and justice do not necessarily coincide? What agency does a woman have to speak out about injustice and be believed?

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"Measure For Measure" will be helmed by guest director Diane Mountford, whose directing credits include Theatre in the Round, Workhouse Theatre, and the Minnesota Shakespeare Project. She previously directed "Richard II" for CAE in 2011.

WHERE/WHEN

The performances will run November 30 - December 23 at the Gremlin Theatre, 550 Vandalia Street, St. Paul, MN 55114. Thursday through Saturday evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., starting with "Women Beware Women", alternating evenings with "Measure For Measure". Saturday and Sunday matinees will be at 2 p.m.

Tickets are priced on a sliding scale \$18 - 40, and two special pay-what-you-can performances will be given Monday, Dec. 10 ("Measure For Measure") and Monday, Nov. 17 ("Women Beware Women"). Tickets can be purchased at the door, or online at www.classicalactorsensemble.org.

THE ARTISTS

The skilled cast of 16 includes CAE regulars Tom Conry, Timothy Daly, Lolly Foy, Samantha V. Papke, Daniel Kristian Vopava, and Joe Wiener, as well as Eva Gemlo, Vincent Hannam, Hugh Kirsch, Charles Numrich, Tyler Stamm, and Madeline Wall. Scenic and lighting design by Dietrich Poppen. "Women Beware Women" is directed by CAE Artistic Director Joseph Papke, "Measure For Measure" is directed by CAE guest director Diane Mountford.

ABOUT CAE

Classical Actors Ensemble is a Twin Cities theater company that captures the spirit in which the plays of the English Renaissance were originally performed – as popular entertainment. Since its founding in 2009, CAE has presented twenty works by William Shakespeare, John Ford, Thomas Middleton, John Webster, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Dekker. Recent productions include "The Roaring Girl" at the Gremlin Theatre in the spring of 2018 and "Romeo and Juliet" for free in Twin Cities' parks this summer. Their annual educational outreach programs include a spring tour to Minnesota high schools and a summer camp for teen actors. CAE's goal is to demonstrate why these works of art are considered classic and to freshly prove their relevance in today's world.

To learn more about the company, please visit: www.classicalactorsensemble.org/ensemble.html

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