



Pimp my Shakespeare! Shakespeare classics get a comedy infusion in this souped-up reworking of three of the bard's masterpieces.

Iron Age Theatre and the Centre Theater present the Philadelphia premiere of pimped-out, Shaolin, brain-eating "Shakesploitation!" at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival in September. The raucous fast paced comedy will be performed at the Journey Home Community Enrichment Center on September 3, 4, 10, 15, 16 and 17.

"Shakesploitation" takes three classic Shakespeare plays, "Othello," "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet" and resets them into the cinematic worlds of 1970s exploitation films.

In "Grand Theft Othello" The moor and his youthful sidekick Tre battle "the man." Othello is distracted from his mission by Desdemona's imagined infidelity as the crooked cop Iago brings the Othello to his knees.

Romeo and Juliet rise from the dead, the day after their suicide to munch on their reconciled families in "Romeo and Juliet II: Apocalypse."

Hamlet must train with the Shaolin master Phat Ho to defeat the unbeatable fighter technique of Claudius and avenge his father's murder in the slightly dubbed martial arts extravaganza "Hamlet: Burning Fist of Denmark." The noble prince must overcome Ninja Rozencrantz and the blood thirsty and single-minded Fortinbras. The play is riddled with deadly duels and potent puns.

"Shakesploitation," written by Chicago native Andy Grigg, honors the conventions of both the exploitation cinema and Shakespeare while lampooning both genres. Iron Age will bring its signature intensity to the comedy pushing the limits of the script. The play is 75 minutes of non-stop laughter.

Director John Doyle stated, "This is one of the funniest plays I have ever read. It is perfect for the Fringe Festival, big, broad, inventive, and fun."

"Shakesploitation" played to sold out houses at its premiere with New Millennium Theatre in Chicago. Critics raved and rated it "... highly recommended: High School English teachers take note: Given the Cotton Mather Administration running Washington and the spirit of Salem abroad in the land, taking your students to see this collection of three Shakespeare parodies might get you fired. But it may be worth the risk. No kid's going to come out of this hilarious show with anything less than a vastly enhanced appreciation for the Bard's badass potential." states the Reader of Chicago.

Iron Age Theatre has been working in the Philadelphia area for more than 15 years. At last year's Fringe Festival the company presented two plays to sold out houses, "The Interrogation of Nathan Hale" and Howard Zinn's "Marx in Soho." The company presented Amiri Baraka's incendiary play about race relations "Dutchman" which was highlighted on the cover of Theatre Journal. The company was nominated for a Barrymore Award for Outstanding Ensemble for "Terra Nova," at the Centre Theater and recently a diverse group of plays including Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men," "The

Elephant Man," and the O'Neill classic "Moon for the Misbegotten," "Luther," and the east coast premiere of "Sky Girls."

The cast includes two veterans from the popular Philadelphia comedy troupe Waitstaff, Jerry Rudasill, who will play Othello, and Edgar Herwick. These talented comedians are joined by Jered McLenigan, as Hamlet and Iago, who recently appeared as Sancho in "Man of LaMancha" and as Merrick in "The Elephant Man." Steve Hatzai is veteran director and actor both in Philadelphia and larger tri state region brings his powerful performances to the production. Krissy Johnson who has just returned to Philadelphia from a long stay performing in New York appears as Gertrude. David Yashin was last seen at Rider University and in "City of Angels" at the Centre Theater returns to Iron Age Theatre to bring his unique comedy gifts to the roles of Tre and Lady Capulet. Markus Zanders, an Iron Age veteran, will take on the role of Claudius.

Shakesploitation will echo in the galleries of the Journey Home Community Enrichment Center located at 948 N. 8th Street. Journey Home is a Philadelphia-based, non-profit organization whose mission is to transform untapped or long-ignored human potential for change into inspiring social progress. The facility works in partnership with individuals and communities from disadvantaged backgrounds to assist them to reclaim power over their own personal development, with the goal to live a life full of meaning and dignity. They do this by providing innovative educational programs that build upon people's strengths and encourage the use of imagination to create new visions of their futures. The social responsibility of Journey Home as well as its dedication to creative expression makes this a perfect fit for Iron Age who has been touring nationally with the socially conscious "Marx in Soho" for the past year.

The Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe run from September 2-17, 2005. Ticket can be purchased online beginning August 8 at www.livearts-fringe.org or after August 22 by calling 215.413.1318. Fringe guides which include dates, times, and venues for all performances for both festivals, will be available in the Philadelphia City Paper on August 25, 2005 and at all venues.

The Philadelphia Live Arts Festival and Philly Fringe were originally founded in 1997 as the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Today, the Live Arts Festival serves as a series of selected cutting-edge, boundary-breaking performing arts events, created by some of the most renowned contemporary artists from our region and around the world. The Fringe serves as a collective home for artists bringing their work to audiences in every conceivable form - in traditional and untraditional venues, using new artistic forms and established ones, breaking rules or refining them.

Tickets for the production will cost \$15. Information about "Shakesploitation," as well as a wealth of dramaturgical and study support can be found at the Iron Age Theatre website at www.ironagetheatre.org.