

Drama, comedy and music shimmer at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival

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The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2018 season officially opens Friday, Feb. 23, with "Othello," "Sense and Sensibility" and "Destiny of Desire" in the Angus Bowmer Theatre and the final part of William Shakespeare's history tetralogy, "Henry V," in the Thomas Theatre.

Along with this weekend's opening performances, the full 2018 playbill includes Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!" and "Snow in Midsummer" in the Bowmer; "Manahatta" and "The Way the Mountain Moved" in the intimate Thomas; and "Romeo and Juliet," "The Book of Will" and "Love's Labor's Lost" in the outdoor Allen Elizabethan Theatre.

Audiences can further immerse themselves in the plays by attending Festival Noons, a series of talks, demonstrations, prefaces and conversations with playwrights, directors, scholars, actors and designers, to be offered Saturdays, March 3 through May 12. Tickets are \$12, \$10 for OSF members, \$8 for age 6 through 17.

All tickets can be purchased at osfashland.org or by calling 800-219-8161.

'Othello'

Those who praised Moorish general Othello's military successes now reject his marriage to Venetian Desdemona. The newlyweds are determined to overcome all obstacles, but Othello's assignment to a new location draws them into the demonic web of his military aide Iago, who is resolute in undermining Othello and his marriage.

Rauch directs this intimate Shakespeare tragedy, and he describes the play in a press release as one in which Shakespeare aggressively tackles how a society navigates difference, in particular race, national origin and religious bigotry.

The intimacy of the play is reflected in its two- and three-person scenes. Rauch chose to cast only 12 actors in order to increase the pressure of the plot in which the characters' lives unravel and to set the story in contemporary America and a naval military structure in Cyprus.

The cast features Chris Butler as Othello; Danforth Comins as Iago; Alejandra Escalante as Desdemona; Derek Garza as Cassio; Stephen Michael Spencer as Roderigo; Amy Kim Waschke as Emilia; Richard Howard as Brabantio and Kosta; Barzin Akhavan as Montano; Richard Elmore as Duke of Venice and Hektor; Rainbow Dickerson as Bianca; James Ryen as Lodovico; and Sheila Tousey as Gratiana and Andela.

Scenic design is by Christopher Acebo; costumes by Dede M. Ayite; lighting by Xavier Pierce; composition and sound design by Andre J. Pluess; and projection design by Tom Ontiveros. Dawn Monique Williams is dramaturg; Barry Kraft is textual consultant; Rebecca Clark Carey

is voice and text director; U. Jonathan Toppo is fight director; and Gwen Turos is stage manager.

“Othello” opens at 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 23, and runs through Oct. 28 in the Angus Bowmer Theatre.

‘Henry V’

OSF’s journey through Shakespeare’s history tetralogy continues after its 2016 run of “Richard II” and 2017 productions of “Henry IV: Part One and Part Two.” Political intrigues, schemes, plots and battles of early 15th-century England unfold in “Henry V,” as actor Daniel José Molina completes his three-play transformation from reckless party-boy Prince Hal to the shrewd and ruthless young leader King Henry V.

Seattle-based Rosa Joshi makes her directorial debut with “Henry V” at OSF. Joshi has directed many of Shakespeare’s plays, including history plays “King John” and “Richard II.” She sees them as political war plays and explores how they resonate with contemporary audiences, she says in a video at osfashland.org. She’s fascinated by how leaders’ personalities and political and military strategies can draw their countries into wars and affect history.

For “Henry V,” Joshi is interested in creating a theatrical world on stage that will engage the imagination of audiences, a world that is modern and medieval and visually abstract. Her direction will ask audiences to actively engage in the story.

Along with Molina in the role of Henry V, the ensemble cast features Jessica Ko as Katherine and Montjoy; Michele Mais as Hostess Quickly, Alice and the French ambassador; Rex Young as Fluellen, King of France and Canterbury; Moses Villarama as Dauphin, Bishop of Ely and Gower; Shyla Lefner as Salisbury and Orleans; Shaun Taylor-Corbett as Nym, Cambridge and Bates; Robert Vincent Frank as Bardolph, Scroop and Williams; Jeremy Gallardo as Bedford and Burgundy; Kimberly Scott as Pistol, Grey and Governor; Tyrone Wilson as Exeter; and Christopher Salazar as Westmoreland, Constable and Macmorris.

Richard Hay is scenic designer; costumes are by Sara Ryung Clement; and lighting design is by Geoff Korf. The composer and sound designer is Palmer Hefferan, choreographer is Alice Gosti, dramaturgs are Amrita Ramanan and Alan Armstrong. Voice and text director is David Carey, fight director is U. Jonathan Toppo, and Jill Rendall is stage manager.

The show previews at 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Feb. 22-23, opens at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, and runs through Oct. 27 in the Thomas Theatre.

‘Sense and Sensibility’

Life takes a sudden turn when Mrs. Dashwood and her three daughters are tossed out of their home by a selfish half-brother. With no money, marriage prospects become bleak, and when love — or what looks like love — comes calling for the girls, they are whirled into a tangle of gossip, scandal and unexpected fortune.

Playwright Kate Hamill's adaptation of Jane Austen's romance is full of comedic surprises and wicked social commentary. Hana S. Sharif, associate artistic director at Baltimore Center Stage and a passionate Jane Austen fan, makes her directorial debut at OSF. She commissioned, directed and produced a premiere adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice" at BCS.

OSF's "Sense and Sensibility" will be true to its period with its beauty and glamor, but with the wit and energy of a 21st-century adaptation.

The cast features Nancy Rodriguez as Elinor Dashwood; Emily Ota as Marianne Dashwood; Kate Mulligan as Mrs. Dashwood; Samantha Miller as Margaret Dashwood and Lucy Steele; Amy Newman as Fanny Dashwood; K. T. Vogt as Mrs. Jennings; Kevin Kenerly as Col. Brandon; Armando McClain as Edward Ferrars; Nate Cheeseman as Willoughby and Robert Ferrars; Michael J. Hume as Sir John Middleton, Doctor and Mr. Dashwood; Brent Hinkley as John Dashwood and Thomas; and Lauren Modica as Lady Middleton, Anne Steele and Charlotte.

Scenic design is by Collette Pollard; costume designer is Fabio Toblini; lighting designer is Rui Rita; composer and sound designer is Justin Ellington; and choreographer is Jaclyn Miller. Dramaturg is Lydia G. Garcia; voice and text director is Robert Ramirez; U. Jonathan Toppo is fight director; and D. Christian Bolender is stage manager.

The show opens at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, and runs through Oct. 28 in the Angus Bowmer Theatre.

'Destiny of Desire'

Playwright Karen Zacarias' send-up of love and betrayal overflows amid a cast of Mexican telenovela characters. Two girls — one rich but sickly, one poor and healthy — are switched at birth by a scheming beauty queen. Chaos ensues later when they meet, become friends and fall for men they are forbidden to love.

Jose Luis Valenzuela directs this musical, with nods to Shakespeare's comedies and Bertolt Brecht's epic theater. Valenzuela is artistic director of Latino Theater Company and Los Angeles Theatre Center and a professor of theater at University of California at Los Angeles where he heads the Master of Fine Arts directing program.

The cast features Adriana Sevahn Nichols as Hortencia Del Rio; Eddie Lopez as Ernesto Del Rio; Ella Saldana North as Victoria Maria Del Rio; Armando Durán as Armando Castillo; Vilma Silva as Fabiola Castillo; Esperanza America as Pilar Esperanza Castillo; Eduardo Enrikez as Sebastian José Castillo; Al Espinosa as Dr. Jorge Ramiro Mendoza; Fidel Gomez as Dr. Diego Mendoza; Catherine Castellanos as Sister Sonia; and Agustin Lara as Juan Manuel Rivera Colon.

Music is by Rosino Serrano; scenic design is by Francois Pierre Couture; costume design by Julie Weiss; lighting design by Pablo Santiago; and sound design by John Zalewski. Music director is Deborah Wicks La Puma; choreographer is Robert Fleming; and assistant costume

designer is Carolyn Mazuca. Dramaturg is Julie Felise Dubiner; Robert Ramirez is voice and text director; U. Jonathan Toppo is fight director; and Jeremy Eisen is stage manager.

The show opens at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, and runs through July 12 in the Angus Bowmer Theatre.