



THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA



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‘The Two Gentlemen of Verona’

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

By Jean Lowerison

Young lovers, meddling parents, clever servants, the nature vs. court dichotomy, gender-bending outlaws and even an adorable dog figure in Shakespeare’s early comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in a delightful production through Sunday on the Old Globe Arena Stage.

Richard Seer directs this co-production between the Old Globe Theatre and USD’s graduate theater program. James Winker adapted the play.



The titular gentlemen are two buddies debating whether travel is more important than love or the reverse. Valentine (Jordan McArthur) thinks the answer is travel, and leaves fair Verona to prove it. Proteus (Andrew Dahl), in a moon-June-groom frame of mind, stays home to woo girlfriend Julia (Aubrey Saverino).

Valentine doesn't get far – Milan – when he sees Sylvia (Catherine Gowl) and changes his mind about the importance of travel. Unfortunately, her father the Duke (Steven Marzolf) has another suitor in mind – Thurio (Christian Durso), a social zero with a big bank account.

The trouble starts when Proteus' father sends him off to Milan to reap the benefits of travel – and he gets a look at the lovely Sylvia. Suddenly Julia is forgotten, friendship is in jeopardy and all sorts of craziness (including perfidy, hilarity and forgiveness) is in store for viewers.

The four young lovers (Dahl, Saverino, McArthur and Gowl) are top-notch and great fun to watch. Kevin Hoffmann is a stitch as Speed, Valentine's quick-witted page. Andrew Hutcheson's Launce, keeper of the dog (a lovable ancient Lhasa poo) is supposed to be slower of wit, but proved quick on the draw with a great ad-lib when the dog barked.



This is the last time the in-the-round Arena Stage will be used by the Old Globe, and this cast does better than any I've seen at playing to all sides of the house.

It won't pay to try to make sense of this plot. Presumably based on Jorge de Montemayor's prose romance *Diana*, this play shows a young Shakespeare just learning his craft. But it's a delightful production. So sit back, relax and put up with the puns, bad jokes and logical inconsistencies as you enjoy the 1910 setting, Scott Joplin tunes and truly lyrical moments.

The Old Globe/USD production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* plays through November 22, 2009 at the Old Globe Arena Stage. Shows Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m.; Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 and 7 p.m. For tickets call (619) 23-GLOBE or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.

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Fraction (left) as Crab and Drew Hutcherson as Launce in "The Two Gentlemen from Verona." (Photo courtesy of The Old Globe)

The Inconstancy of Love

THE SHOW: "The Two Gentlemen from Verona," an early Shakespeare comedy, presented by the USD/Old Globe MFA students

"Two Gents" is one of Shakespeare's earliest efforts, a romantic comedy about love, loyalty and morality. The plotline gets a little far-fetched and hard to swallow at the end (well, it's a Shakespeare comedy!), but it's a fun ride nonetheless, especially as executed by the hugely talented grad students in the USD/Old Globe MFA Theatre program.

The story goes like this: the two so-called gentlemen of the title, Proteus and Valentine, are the very best of friends. Valentine goes off to Milan to gain some life experience (and oh boy, does he!). But Proteus (whose name aptly derives from the shape-shifting god of mythology) stays behind, lovesick over Julia. Soon, however, his father sends him off to Milan, too. And the second he lays eyes on Sylvia, the daughter of the Duke and Valentine's new beloved, he loses his head, forgets about Julia and sets about stealing the young woman away from his friend, in the most underhanded of ways.

Meanwhile, Julia, dressed as a boy, goes after Proteus, while Sylvia rejects Proteus' aggressive advances (the women are always smarter!). When desperate Proteus goes to the Duke to expose his friend, who's about to elope with Sylvia, Valentine is banished, and he takes up with some bandits (here, sexy gypsies!) in the woods.

At the end, in perhaps the most insane stretch of credibility in the Shakespeare's canon, Valentine forgives Proteus (though the less-than-gentle/genteel Proteus just tried to force himself physically/sexually on Sylvia), Julia forgives Proteus and takes him back, the friends are reunited (in some interpretations of the play, Valentine actually offers to "give" Sylvia to Proteus as proof of his friendship), and everyone is united in (un)holy matrimony.

One of the highlights of the play is the dog, the "sourest-natured" cur named Crab. Here, he's an adorable little fluffball who is flopped into arms or onto the floor and doesn't budge (I was later told that the poor creature is

blind and deaf, which makes him an ideal stage animal, unable to be distracted).

For this delightful production, directed by the astute and highly accomplished MFA Program Director Richard Seer, the setting is moved to the early 20th century, underscored by Ragtime music (musical direction by Robert Barry Fleming, with original music by John Kander, co-creator of such shows as "Cabaret" and "Chicago." His music provided a best-ever version of "Who is Sylvia?").

The time-shift works fine, especially for the lovely costumes (designed by Michelle Hunt Souza). The only quibble with the entire effort is that there isn't much of a distinction made between Verona, where the play starts, and Milan, where it migrates, before ending in the forest. Typically, big-city Milan is portrayed as some sort of den of iniquity, but here, there seems to be little difference from its sister locale.

Otherwise, everything clicks with alacrity and precision. The language is handled beautifully, with clarity and ease. The lighting (Jason Bieber) and sound (Paul Peterson) are excellent. The scenic design (Sean Fanning) is whimsical, a brightly colored, circus-y flower pattern painted on a raised circular platform. The aisles are used well, and the fight choreography (George Yé) is convincing. The 14-member cast is superb; there really isn't a weak link in the bunch. It's a very satisfying and thoroughly enjoyable production, which shouldn't be missed.

THE LOCATION: The Old Globe's temporary Arena Stage at the San Diego Museum of Art, on the Prado in Balboa Park. (619) 234-5623; www.theoldglobe.org

THE DETAILS: Tickets: \$19. Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m., Sunday at 2 and 7 p.m., through November 22

THE BOTTOM LINE: BEST BET



"Side Show." (Photo courtesy of Harts Performance Inc.)

THE SHOW: "Side Show," a musical by Henry Krieger and Bill Russell, presented by Harts Performance Inc.

Identical twins Shauna Hart Ostrom and Shelly Hart Breneman, local performers and co-directors of the Actors Alliance of San Diego, were tailor-made for "Side Show," the 1997 Tony-nominated musical story of real-life conjoined twins, Violet and Daisy Hilton (1908-1969). The sisters assayed the roles three years ago, at the Broadway Theatre in Vista, but apparently, they didn't have their fill. So they formed their own production company, Harts Performance Inc., and made "Side Show" the inaugural production. They rented the Lyceum Space Theatre, and brought along large chunks of the earlier production: actors, musical director, choreographer and many of the excellent costumes. They hired Shaun Evans, artistic director of the California Youth Conservatory Theatre, to direct, play a major role and insert some young performers into the cast. The result is a



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The Old Globe & University of San Diego Graduate Theatre Program Present Shakespeare's THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, 11/14 - 11/22

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The [Old Globe](#)/University of San Diego Graduate Theatre Program will present [William Shakespeare's](#) The Two Gentlemen of Verona at [The Old Globe Arena Stage](#) at the James S. Copley Auditorium, San Diego Museum of Art. Directed by Program Director [Richard Seer](#), The Two Gentlemen of Verona will run Nov. 14 - Nov. 22.

Friendship and passion entangle all in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, a clever comedy about jealousy and the fickle nature of love. Bawdy bandits, cross-

ressing, and a "sourest-natured" dog named Crab make this one of Shakespeare's most memorable plays.

The cast features [Jordan McArthur](#) (Valentine), [Steven Marzolf](#) (Duke), Grayson DeJesus (Sir Eglamour), Christian Durso (Thurio), Drew Hutcheson (Launce), [Kevin Hoffmann](#) (Speed), Ben Diskant (Antonio), Andrew Dahl (Proteus), [Aubrey Saverino](#) (Julia), Catherine Gowll (Sylvia), Bree Welch (Lucetta), [Brooke Novak](#) (Hostess), Shirine Babb (Augusta) and Rymen Sneed (Carlotta).

The creative team also includes Sean Fanning (Scenic Design), Michelle Hunt Souza (Costume Design), Jason Bieber (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design), Ray Chambers (Dramaturg), Jan Gist (Vocal Coach), Liz Shipman (Movement) and Natasha Kelly (Stage Manager).

A joint venture of [The Old Globe](#) and the University of San Diego, the Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Arts program nationally recruits seven students each year to participate in an intensive two-year, year-round course of graduate study in classical theatre. For more information, please visit [www.globemfa.org](#).

An award-winning actor and director, [Richard Seer](#) has directed and/or performed on Broadway, off-Broadway, on film and television, and in over seventy productions at regional theatres in this country and Great Britain, including [The Goodman Theatre](#), The Kennedy Center, The Stratford Shakespeare Festival, The [Brooklyn Academy Of Music](#), The [Huntington Theatre Company](#) in Boston, Washington's Playwrights' Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, [Studio Arena Theatre](#), The Edinburgh Festival in Scotland and The [Sybil Thorndike](#) Repertory Theatre in England, to name a few. He originated the role of Young Charlie in the 1978 Tony award-winning production of [Hugh Leonard's](#) Da and received the [Theatre World Award](#) for his performance. As [The Old Globe's](#) resident director, he has directed productions of *The Price*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Trying*, *Fiction*, *Blue/Orange* (Critics Circle Award), *All My Sons*, *Da*, and *Old Wicked Songs* (Patte Award). Other recent directing assignments include *Third* for the [Huntington Theatre Company](#) and *Sonia Flew* for San Jose Repertory Theatre. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree in directing from Boston University, where he was awarded the prestigious Kahn Directing Award in 1985. In 1990, he was invited to return to Boston University's School for the Arts as an Associate Professor of Acting and Directing. Professor Seer has been Director of [The Old Globe](#)/University of San Diego Graduate Theatre program since 1993.

Tickets to The Two Gentlemen of Verona can be purchased online at [www.TheOldGlobe.org](#), by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances begin on Nov. 14 and continue through Nov. 22. Ticket are \$19. Performance times: Saturday, November 14th at 8 p.m.; Sunday, November 15th at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Tuesday November 17 at 7 p.m.; Wednesday, November 18 at 7 p.m.; Thursday, November 19 at 8 p.m.; Friday, November 20 at 8 p.m.; Saturday, November 21 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday, November 22 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

[The Old Globe](#) is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit [www.BalboaPark.org](#).

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 74 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer [Louis G. Spisto](#), [The Old Globe](#) produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 580-seat [Old Globe Theatre](#), the 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#), home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education programs and outreach services.

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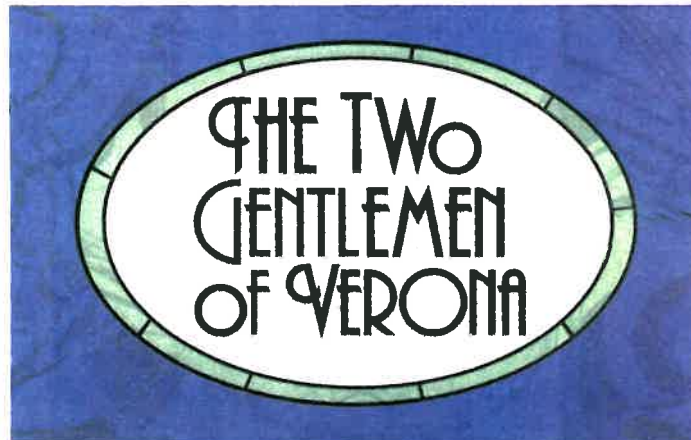
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THE RAGE

November

2009

theatre by lisa lipsey



The Two Gentlemen of Verona

The Old Globe in conjunction with University of San Diego Graduate Theatre Program will present William Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at their less common venue: The Old Globe Arena Stage at the James S. Copley Auditorium, San Diego Museum of Art. Directed by Program Director Richard Seer, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is one of Shakespeare's earliest plays. It includes all of his "trademark" comedic tricks from the mishaps of love to the band of lewd bandits, to cross-dressing fun, physical humor and a hilarious servant and his dog, Crab.

***The Two Gentlemen of Verona* plays November 14 – 22 at the Old Globe Theatre.**

For tickets and more information call 619.234.5623.



SMELL THE GREASEPAINT

By Kell Dalley

Know what's great about college theater? Its actors-in-training are malleable and not as comfortably and reliably hammy as, say, an old cut of meat like Jim Carrey. San Diego's campuses play a part in sharpening set designers, sound and lighting designers, directors and thespians, some of whom turn into award-winning professionals.

So if you want another "I-saw-them-when-they-were-hungry" story, or if you're game for big-name plays and musicals even if they're done by — as yet — little-name artists, November's your chance to gorge on the local dramatic talent.

"Topdog/Underdog"

UC San Diego

When: Through Saturday

Where: The Arthur Wagner Theatre in Galbraith Hall, 9500 Gilman Drive

Tickets: \$10-\$20

Phone: (858) 534-4574

Online: theatre.ucsd.edu/season/Topdog/

UCSD's boilerplate says it keeps company with Yale and NYU in the top slots for graduate theater programs, so we expect much from this Suzan-Lori Parks' Pulitzer Prize-winning play, starring MFA students Bowman Wright and Johnny Gill. It's about a sibling rivalry between African-American brothers Lincoln (whose name is a tip of the top hat to "The Great Emancipator") and Booth (yes, his assassin).

"The House of Bernarda Alba"

UCSD

When: Nov. 19-29

Where: Theodore and Adele Shank Theatre, 9500 Gilman Drive

Tickets: \$8-\$20

Phone: (858) 534-4574

Online: theatre.ucsd.edu/season/House/

Spanish playwright Federico Garcia Lorca's last work — finished months before he faced a firing squad — is a tale about a village household governed by a tyrant matriarch. (Echoes of Franco, anyone?) Part of the passionate "Blood Wedding" trilogy, this production is directed by MFA student Jeffrey Wienckowski.

"Camino Real"

UCSD

When: Nov. 23-Dec. 5

Where: Sheila and



San Diego City College takes on "Bye Bye Birdie," a revival that is currently on Broadway — what's not to love? *Manuel Rotenberg*

Hughes Potiker Theatre, 9500 Gilman Drive

Tickets: \$8-\$20

Phone: (858) 534-4574

Online: theatre.ucsd.edu/season/CaminoReal/

UCSD student director Adam Arian tackles Tennessee Williams' vision of a police state for his thesis production. Arian picked up a local Patti Award — aka San Diego's Tony Award — for directing last year's "Rosenkrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead." Here's hoping his latest gets him an A+.

"Bye Bye Birdie"

San Diego City College

When: Through Sunday

Where: Saville Theatre, 1313 Park Blvd.

Tickets: \$10-\$15

Phone: (619) 388-3676

Online: www.sdcity.edu/savilletheater

College and high school students twist and belt it out for 1950s feel-good spectacle — currently and coincidentally on Broadway. This Tony Award-winning musical is about teen rock idol Conrad Birdie, who is on his way to the army but not

before his last publicity kiss on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

"Into the Woods"

San Diego State University

When: Tomorrow through Nov. 22

Where: Don Powell Theatre, 5500 Campanile Drive

Tickets: \$13-\$15

Phone: (619) 594-6884

Online: theatre.sdsu.edu

This Tony Award-winning Stephen Sondheim musical, which made its debut at the Old Globe in 1986, mangles the "happily ever after" part of fairy tales. The Aztecs have a graduate emphasis on pre-professional musical theater, one of three schools in the country that do-re-mi.

"An Experiment With an Air Pump"

University of San Diego

When: Nov. 19-24

Where: Black Box, Camino Hall 131, 5998 Alcala Park

Phone: (619) 260-2727

Tickets: \$8-\$11

USD's undergrads take us to Europe to untangle a scientific secret that spans 200 years, told through two interwoven stories, one set in 1799 and another in the age of stem-cell research. Sounds like a night of prop microscopes and philosophic theater.

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona"

USD

When: Saturday through Nov. 22

Where: Arena Stage at James S. Copley Auditorium, San Diego Museum of Art

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Tickets: \$8-\$19

Online: theoldglobe.org

Before Emmy-nominated Jim Parsons exploded on CBS' "Big Bang Theory," he studied at USD's Graduate Theatre Program, which teams up with the Old Globe to present polished productions. See the current crop of student talent as they take on the Bard's two comedic go-tos — cross-dressing and romance.

"Sylvia"

Grossmont College

When: Through Nov. 21

Where: The Lab Theatre, 8800 Grossmont College Drive

Phone: (619) 644-7234

Tickets: \$8-\$10

Online: www.grossmont.edu/theatrebrochure/

What happens when a pet interferes with a love affair? Comedy, according to A.R. Gurney's rom-com about a rescue dog named Sylvia. Starring four actors from Grossmont College's Theatre Arts program.