



Impromptu Productions brings the Bard back to Barrie Street

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Local theatre fans rejoice!

After several years on hiatus, Shakespeare in the Park will return to City Park this weekend, thanks to the newly-formed local theatre group Impromptu Productions. The classic comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* will be staged Aug. 26-28 in the area of the park near the corner of Barrie and King streets.

"I thought that City Park was just such a great space for it, and that it was a shame not to use it," says company cofounder Bonnie MacLeod, who is also producing and directing the play, in addition to portraying the starring role of Beatrice.

"What I really like about Shakespeare in the Park is that it makes it accessible to a lot of people. So people who can't necessarily make it to a theatre can come and enjoy an afternoon and be involved. The atmosphere here is really great."

The choice of play, she says, came very naturally.

"I wanted to do a comedy, something light-hearted, and this seemed like a good fit (because) it fits in the outdoor setting. As well, the characters of Benedict and Beatrice - the two leads - are a little more interesting than some of the other couples in Shakespeare because they have a lot to say to each other. The dialogue is great, and it just seemed like it would be a really fun project."

The set for the play will be minimal, and the lighting natural. Two large trees will be used to frame the stage.

"There's sort of an avenue of trees behind it and it gives it a really nice backdrop," says MacLeod. "We're really just using the natural setting to our advantage."

Reece Presley, who plays Benedict, notes that this will be his first time performing in an outdoor environment.

"I'm interested to see how it goes," he says. "I expect we'll get a bigger crowd because it's

in the park and it's open. People will be walking by and hopefully they'll come over and see why people are wearing costumes."

While Presley has performed in many Shakespearian productions throughout his student career at Queen's University, he explains that acting in a comedy is a bit of a departure from what he is used to.

"I normally play the bad guys, or the really evil angry guys (in dramas)," he says. "To play someone who's light-hearted and really, really funny has been (a bit of a challenge)...But I love comedies, and it's just so fun to...have people laughing as opposed to people really upset in the audience."

Presley remarks that unlike most of the shows he has performed in as a student, all of the actors in *Much Ado about Nothing* are roughly the same age as the characters they are portraying.

"The show has a great cast," he says, "people from all walks of life...So I think people will have a bit more fun with the show seeing as (those playing the roles are) the appropriate age groups."

There is no set price or tickets associated with viewing the play, however donations will be accepted. After expenses are covered, the remaining proceeds will be distributed among Impromptu Productions, and the other companies that helped make the event possible by supplying costumes and props: Thousand Islands Playhouse, Bottle Tree Productions and Blue Canoe Productions.

MacLeod notes that this will not be the last the community sees from Impromptu Productions.

"I'd be happy to see Shakespeare in the Park again next summer," she says. "Depending on what the group of people is interested in doing, we might take on some other projects throughout the year as well."

Much Ado About Nothing will be performed Aug. 26 at 5 p.m., Aug. 27 at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. and Aug. 28 at 1 p.m. In case of rain, the play will be held in the Sutherland Room at the John Deutsch University Centre at the same times.