



The Nashville Shakespeare Festival

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NASHVILLE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL BEGINS ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A WINTER PRODUCTION OF HAMLET

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Nashville Shakespeare Festival is kicking off its 20th anniversary season with a winter production of *Hamlet*.

The production, the Festival's first public winter production since 2002 and its first as a professional theater in residence at Belmont University, "promises to be friendly to first-time viewers and intriguing to the seasoned Shakespeare fan," said *Hamlet* director Denice Hicks.

Hicks' mission for this production of *Hamlet* is to put the spotlight on the main character, played by Nashville favorite Pete Vann, like no other production of *Hamlet* has. According to Hicks, Vann will play "the most personable, sympathetic Hamlet anybody has ever seen." The rest of the cast, which includes four Belmont students in addition to the seven professional actors, will present their characters such that each is focused on helping Hamlet tell his story.

This is the first time that the Festival has worked with Belmont on a production, and by making the Troutt Theater its new winter home, the Festival will be able to further its mission of not only entertaining, but also educating.

"We have partnered with several universities and colleges across the mid-South," explained the Festival's executive director, Nancy VanReece. "Locally, we continue to work with Vanderbilt University, MTSU and TSU, among others in a variety of ways. However, Belmont is the first winter home for a consistent collaboration as a theater in residence. We are already planning for 2009 and 2010 programming there."

"We are honored to be among the other professional companies using this beautiful facility," said Hicks, "and we are excited to incorporate the Belmont students and faculty into our production."

Belmont University theater department chairman Paul Gatrell designed the set, Tony Award-winner Franne Lee is the costume designer, and MTSU professor Anne Willingham is responsible for the lighting design.

Performances, beginning Jan. 17, will be held Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m., through Feb. 2. Tickets are on sale at www.nashvilleshakes.org. Group

discounts are available. School matinee performances and in-school *Hamlet* workshops are offered, and an ASL-interpreted performance is set for Sunday, Jan. 20.

For more information, please call the Nashville Shakespeare Festival at (615) 255- 2273, or visit www.nashvilleshakes.org.

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