


## Voices &amp; Commentary


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# Shakespeare for everyone

**A** talking wall. A crying moon. A bearded man in a poodle skirt playing the female object of another man's affections. Fifties doo-wop songs juxtaposed with Shakespearean dialogue. Maybe not your grandfather's Shakespeare, but that's the point of "Much Adoo-Wop About Something," which this week graces a public stage in Des Moines: It's everyone's.

And for an era when much of mass, public entertainment might be defined as Facebook, Conan O'Brien and the occasional beer-soaked rock concert, the offerings of the new Iowa Shakespeare Experience company show that something written 400 years ago can be current, thought-provoking and still as outrageous as something you'd see on YouTube.

"Much Adoo-Wop," arranged and directed by Lorenzo Sandoval, gives excerpts of Shakespearean love stories an urban twist. It will alternate with "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged" in a lineup of free outdoor performances July 23 through Aug. 2 at the outdoor Simon Estes Amphitheater, framed by the river, bridges and a city skyline.

The dialogue remains Shakespeare's. The costumes are in period. The themes — forbidden love, family discord, bad timing — are timeless. The remarkable thing is, seeing Shakespeare only this way, you might think he was of this generation.

Until now, Sandoval and Robin Heinemann have been



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For more information,  
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producing Shakespeare plays more traditionally at Salisbury House, for a paying audience that typically knew the work. This summer, the Repertory Theater Co. of Iowa has taken that over, while the couple's new company, funded by Bravo and the Iowa Arts Council, is devoted to bringing Shakespeare's works to different audiences. That includes even some of the actors.

Aaron Smith is new to Shakespeare. As the narrator of "Much Adoo-Wop," who appears as Puck from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Smith, with a head full of braids, gives the part a different look. But he brings, in Sandoval's words, "a natural talent and an edginess mixed in with a lyricism from the streets of Des Moines."

Some of the crew and actors are seasoned Des Moines ones, while others, like the pony-tailed Matt Wiggins, who plays Petruchio from "The Taming of the Shrew," are new to acting. Wiggins sells suits by day and performs in a heavy-metal band by night, but looks hip and at home in

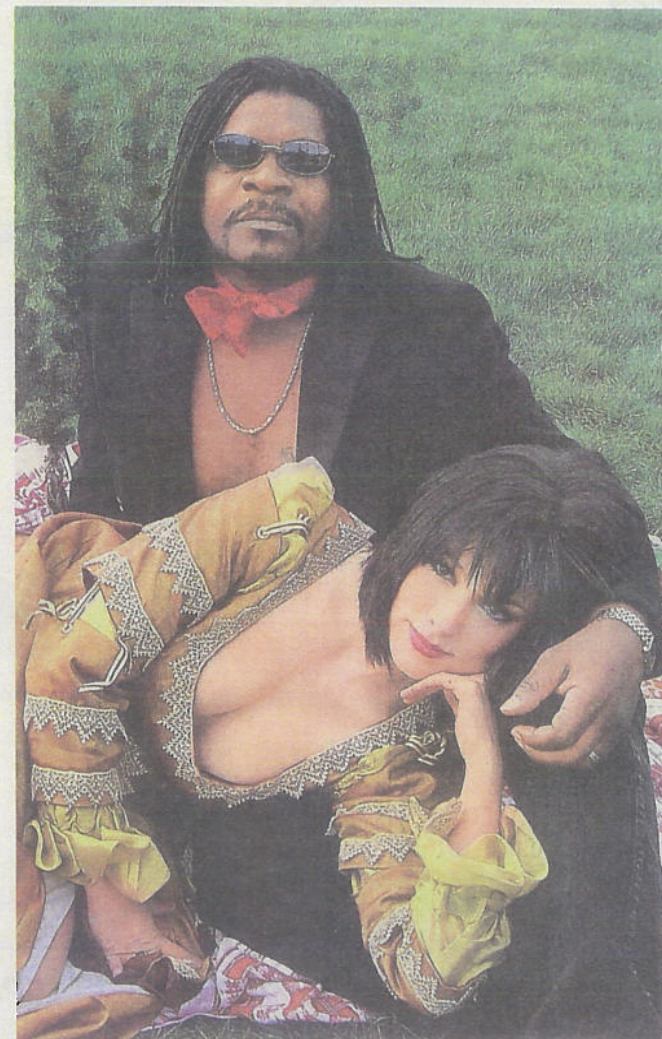
Elizabethan era garb: leather boots and black, skirted mini-dress with a waistcoat above black pants.

Mixing it up this way has special resonance for Sandoval, who got hooked the first time he encountered Shakespeare as a 13-year-old Mexican-American kid, picnicking through a Quad Cities production of "A Midsummer Nights Dream." He began reading Shakespeare, joined the company, the Genesis Guild, and as an adult, abandoned a management career to earn a master's in fine arts in playwriting. This week he brings things full circle.

For Sandoval, Shakespeare's words are a "portal" into the inner lives of characters. Though taught as literature, Sandoval believes Shakespeare was written to be performed.

"The point is that Shakespeare is for everyone," says Heinemann, who encourages audiences to bring wine and picnics. "It's for you."

It's for two stagehands who are recent Iraqi refugees, and whose father had been a Shakespearean actor in Iraq. It's for two older women Heinemann encountered by a skywalk window while putting up a display, who appeared down on their luck and got excited when she said they could come, for free. It's for lovers of the classics and of slapstick. Just imagine some prominent politicians or personalities in the roles, and you'll get the timeless nature of it. It's a great addition to Des Moines' cultural scene.



SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER  
Aaron Smith and Amanda Mullen are members of the new Iowa Shakespeare Experience company, which is performing "Much Adoo-Wop About Something."