

Shakespeare's 'Titus' opens tonight - Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) - August 15, 1997

August 15, 1997 | Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) | Kathleen Mills H-T Staff Writer

Titus Andronicus started off life as a pretty popular Shakespeare play.

The title page of the first edition of the work says that three companies staged the tragedy.

But thereafter, the tragedy, which is thought to be Shakespeare's first, fell out of favor.

Monroe County Civic Theater hopes to resurrect some of that early enthusiasm by offering two weekends of **Titus Andronicus**.

The play opens tonight in Third Street Park.

"I've done a lot of Shakespeare," said Andy Cambridge, who is co-directing **Titus** with Kyle McIntosh. "I really like Shakespeare and this is a unique opportunity to bring back a play that was popular in Shakespeare's day."

Scholars note elements of **Titus** such as the combination of feigned lunacy with some real insanity and a portrait of a man completely out of his depth, that Shakespeare developed in his later plays, *Othello* and *King Lear*.

Cambridge said McIntosh edited the play to make it more accessible to audiences. "We edited some of the classical references that wouldn't be understood today and edited the repetitions," Cambridge said.

Those two snags "have made it a less popular play" in the 20th century, Cambridge said.

Cambridge and McIntosh have fashioned **Titus** as a "streamlined, action-packed, good, solid play."

Action indeed.

Having returned from a 10-year war with the Goths, **Titus** is asked to help choose a new Roman emperor. **Titus** chooses Saturninus. In gratitude, Saturninus declares his intention to marry **Titus'** only daughter, Lavinia.

But Bassianus had previously claimed Lavinia. This leads to a fight and **Titus** ends up killing one of his own sons.

Enter Aaron, a scheming Moor in the court of Tamora, who turns out to be a mastermind of evil who terrorizes the **Andronicus** family.

Before it's all over, Lavinia has been raped and had her hands and tongue cut off; a nurse is killed; there's an episode of baby buying; two people have their throats cut and their heads baked into pies; and **Titus**, who has his hand cut off, is seemingly mad.

"It's definitely a tragedy, but we're not playing up the violence and bloodshed too much," Cambridge said.

Cambridge, who will be a junior at Macalaster College in St. Paul, Minn., in the fall, grew up in theater in Bloomington.

He spent years working on-stage and off in the Mini Play Festival. Still, *Titus* is his first full-length directing effort.

"I kind of thought I was ready," Cambridge said of staging *Titus*. "I did my 50th show when I did my last show at Macalaster."

Cambridge said he's looking forward to opening a Shakespeare play that is not terribly well known.

"It's a challenge, but there won't be preconceived notions of what should be and what shouldn't be," he said.

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

Kathleen Mills; H-T Staff Writer, 'Shakespeare's 'Titus' opens tonight', *Herald-Times* (online), 15 Aug 1997
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