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A role fit for a king

BY JENNIFER EVANS
STAFF A&E WRITER

MFA graduate student David Shamburger never thought about becoming involved in theatre in high school or his early college years.

He was too busy exploring the worlds of photography, journalism, and his previous major in music at Northwestern State University in Louisiana.

These days, Shamburger has the title role in *The Life and Death of King John*, opening tonight at 8 p.m. in the Judy Bayley Theatre.

But getting his start in theatre was purely accidental.

"During my junior year, a director came in who was going to start a new theatre program at the university. He guest-directed a musical and I happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Ironically, Shamburger hadn't even planned on auditioning. But he did as a requirement for a class and ended up getting cast.

"From then on," the actor said with a smile, "I was hooked."

The following summer he went to New York on a journalism internship. While there, he decided to pursue theatre, and continued that pursuit during his junior year at Northwestern State University.

He enjoyed it so much, he decided to change his major to theatre and stayed at NSU two years longer than he had originally intended.

Luck was in the air, because immediately after Shamburger decided to concentrate on musical theatre, he was given professional work at an opera house in Texas, where he worked for two summers.

Upon graduating from NSU, Shamburger went off to work for Horse Cave Repertory Theatre Company in Kentucky. While there, he played some interesting roles in *The Cruci-*



David Shamburger

ble and *Julius Caesar*.

His next musical venture took him to a showboat in Clinton, Iowa, where the thespian performed musicals for another two years.

At this point, Shamburger decided it was time for him to start seriously looking for graduate schools.

He initially decided on Temple University in Philadelphia. Although it was a good offer, it didn't fulfill his musical theatre needs.

"I wasn't quite satisfied because I knew I would have to give up my musical training. There are only three schools in the country that offer musical theatre training; UNLV is one of them."

Coincidentally, the number of Robert Brewer, an associate professor in the MFA program at UNLV, caught his eye.

"I had a hunch and called him up on the phone," Shamburger explained. "We talked and he really sold me the program on the phone. When I hung up I bought a plane ticket to come out and audition. When I got here I knew this is where I needed to be."

Shamburger is now a graduate student in the MFA program. Some of his duties in-

clude assisting Michael Lurgig in teaching a section of voice for the stage, a class specified for majors.

Since attending UNLV, Shamburger has performed in a series of productions.

In addition to his current role as King John, he has been cast in *Moab*, *Kissing Shadows*, an original play by MFA playwright student Jennifer Laird; *She Loves Me*, the Christmas musical in which he played perfume salesman Steve Kodaly, the cad you love to hate; and *The Angels Sing: A tribute to Johnny Mercer*, an original musical.

His next performance casts him as Starbuck in *110 In The Shade*. This show will be his first creative project at UNLV that goes toward completing his MFA.

Each graduate student must do two major roles and do a performance thesis on each of those roles.

Although Shamburger admits to a passion for playing the darker characters, he says he enjoys Shakespeare most of all.

As for the future, Shamburger said, "I'd just like to work professionally and steadily, that may not happen, but I'd like to do that. I'd like to stay in the theatre aspect, but I'm open to film or anything like that."

"As far as performing goes right now," Shamburger continued, "theatre is what I like to do best and I think I'll always have a preference for that because that is where I started."

Summertime will take Shamburger to Illinois and his next adventure: performing in more musical theatre.

Among the shows he is slated to perform in are *Crazy for You* and *Damn Yankee's*, in which he has the role of Joe Hardy.

Check this multi-faceted actor out this weekend in *The Life and Death of King John*. The way things are going, Shamburger is headed for stardom.



Unique operas performed at UNLV

Entertainment was high caliber, ticket prices reasonable, but attendance low

BY JAMES KIM
STAFF A & E WRITER

Gianni Schicchi and *Vera of Las Vegas* were performed to surprisingly small audiences in Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall Saturday night.

The first performance, *Gianni Schicchi*, was an operatic comedy by the great Italian composer Puccini (most notable for his *Madame Butterfly*). The performers consisted of UNLV students under faculty guidance.

Set in Florence, Italy circa 1299, the opera is a tale of greed, love and deception. It opens with the death of Buoso Donati. His relatives later discover that Donati has left all of his money to the church.

David Sannerud, director of UNLV Opera Theatre, portrayed Schicchi, the Donati family's deceased uncle. It is his hope to have the will rewritten in more favorable terms. The opera concluded with the young lovers Rinuccio and Lauretta singing of their love for each other.

Vera, a new one-hour, one-act opera by internationally recognized compos-

er Daron Hagen and librettist Paul Muldoon, was then performed and recorded for its ultimate release on compact disc.

The opera is about two illegal Irish immigrants who are being pursued by an agent of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. As the story unfolds in Las Vegas, the two Irish men, who also have IRA ties, meet a transvestite dancer named Vera.

The production involved the talents of several singers of national fame, including Carolann Page, Paul Kreider (UNLV Department of Music chair), Patrick Jones and Charles Maxwell. Both the UNLV chorus and orchestra participated in the production.

Overall, both productions were adequate. Puccini's opera was performed quite capably. Although it was difficult at times to completely understand what the characters were saying, the opera was entertaining.

The opera by Hagen and Muldoon was a bit more unusual. In addition to its strange story line, it featured a mixture of various unrelated musical styles.

As the audience turnout was minimal, the event seemed more at times like a rehearsal than a performance. This situation worsened after the intermission. It was quite disappointing since tickets were relatively inexpensive for such a quality production.

The Life and Death of King John comes to Judy Bayley

BY JAN WILLIAMS
A & E EDITOR

History and theatre fans are in for a rare treat when the UNLV Department of Theatre Art's latest production, *The Life and Death of King John*, opens Thursday evening at the Judy Bayley Theatre.

The production, which is scheduled to run two weekends, is directed by Jeffrey Koep, dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts. He found the material both timely and fresh.

"It's an adventure story with a good use of language, posing arguments and debates among its characters as in *Julius Caesar*, with a fine touch of melodrama as in *Macbeth*," the dean said.

He found King John timely, citing the themes in the play that "examine power and the effects of decisions you make

when you are in the position of power."

Most will remember King John from several writings through history. The first occurrence is the adventures of the probable fictional character of Robin Hood, loyal to Prince John's older brother, King Richard the Lion-Hearted. Robin would steal from the rich (Prince John) and give to the poor, supposedly to sabotage the Prince's attempts to gain King



PHOTO BY VASNA WILSON
The cast of King John prepares for Thursday's opening.

Richard's throne. A factual event about King John is the celebrated signing of the Magna Carta by the weak and ineffectual king in 1215. This act saw the end of the divine right of kings to rule and set in motion the

pendence. David Shamburger headlines in the role of King John; Glenn Peters portrays Philip the Bastard, King Richard's illegitimate son; Jason Johnson appears as Cardinal Pandulph, the Papal Legate;

Todd Horman plays King Philip of France; Curtis C is cast as Hubert de Burgh, King John's henchman; and Kristi Smith portrays Constance, Prince Arthur's mother.

These actors are supported by a large cast. Behind the scenes, set designer Ryk Souza's use of mirrors heightens the images of ambition that men either aspire or stoop to in achieving their goals.

Katrina Hertfelder handles the costume design, and lighting will be staged by Brackley Frayer.

Performance times for *The Life and Death of King John* are 8 p.m. through Saturday and March 20-23, with a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday and March 24. Tickets are \$8 for general admission and \$6 for students and seniors.

For more information, call the Performing Arts Center box office at 895-3801.