

# Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet) Good afternoon UPEI

By MELISSA DOUCETTE

"...Life is a hell of a lot more complicated than you think! Life -- real life -- is a big mess. Thank goodness." Act III, sc. ix.

This week, the UPEI Theatre Society is presenting Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. Performances take place Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8:00 pm in the Alumni Gym.

The *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is the first solo-authored play by Toronto

assistant professor at Queen's University. Constance suffers from unrequited love for her professor/mentor, and falls through her wastebasket into the topsy-turvy world of Shakespearean characters.

Constance has spent years in failed attempts to translate an ancient manuscript that she is determined will reveal the true source of Shakespeare's plays. When she falls through her wastebasket, Constance dreams of setting the story straight. If only Othello had been shown the evil in Iago,

and Haines, Co-Director of the Society, wanted to find "a comedy to wrap [his] mind around that I enjoy."

The Theatre Society has spent the last two and one half months in rehearsals for *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. Students have also been working all semester on stage elements for the play, costumes, and other important elements.

"People are working exhaustively," commented Haines.

In the last few years, adaptations of Shakespeare have flourished. Kenneth Branagh has led the charge with his versions of *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, and his spectacular edition of *Hamlet*, the only uncut version ever filmed. Other directors have filmed *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Tempest*, which was recently made for television on NBC.

In addition, Shakespeare's plays have been rewritten into many other works. Disney's *The Lion King*, supposedly their first "original" film, is *Hamlet*. In *The Lion King*, Simba's father is unjustly killed by Scar in order for Scar to be King, and Simba eventually kills his father's murderer. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet's father is killed by his brother Claudius in order for him to become King, and Hamlet eventually kills his father's murderer.

Other parallels between the two exist as well. *Titantic* is a shoddy version of *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Prospero's Books* retells *The Tempest*. Even *Star Trek* relies on Shakespeare, most

visibly in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, whose title is a line from *Hamlet*'s famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy.

And of course, *Shakespeare in Love*, the story of how Shakespeare came to write *Romeo and Juliet*, has garnered the most nominations for this year's Academy Awards, including best picture.

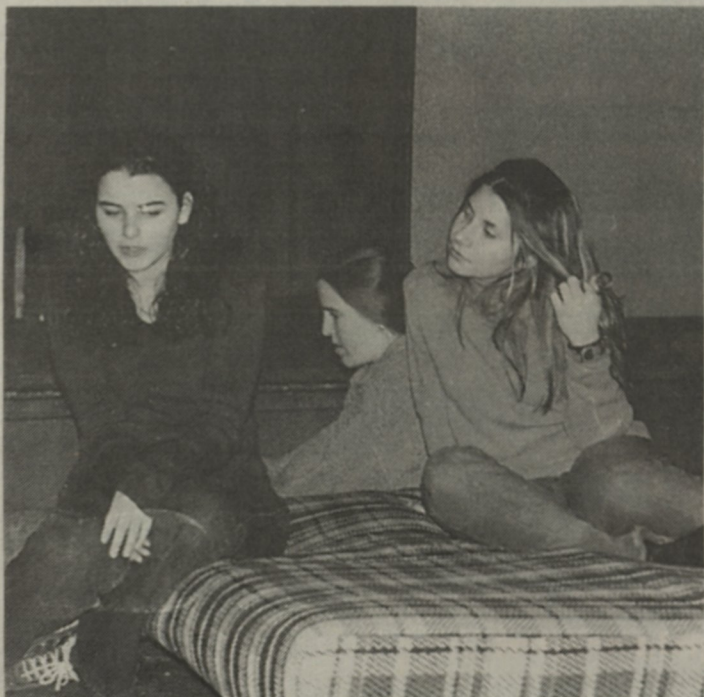
"Shakespeare can be adapted to fit different periods . . . and make them relevant," Haines says about this renewed interest in the Bard. "He never stuck people in doublets and hose."

In the Theatre Society's staging of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, Haines has incorporated three different periods

into the play. The *Romeo and Juliet* world is set in the Elizabethan period, "something Shakespeare would never have done," adds Haines.

The intention is to connect the surreal world as it appears in the play with Shakespeare's. The *Othello* element has been placed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which has the effect of emphasizing the difference between both *Romeo and Juliet* and the contemporary world. Constance's environment is a modern day setting.

"Just like you make each play new and different, I made each act new and different," said Haines. "The big goal is to connect with the audience and make it new," he continued.



based actor/writer MacDonald. It has won the prestigious Governor General's Award, the Chalmers Award, and the Canadian Authors' Association Award.

This Shakespearean farce is centred on Constance Ledbelly, a tenure-hungry

if only Tybalt had been told that Romeo was his cousin-in-law, then these tragedies could have been the comedies the original author had intended before Shakespeare transformed them.

For the Theatre Society's main production, Rich-



Tickets for *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* are available at the door, and cost \$7 for students and seniors, and \$10 for adults.