

THE ISLANDS' WEEKLY

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 36 • SEPTEMBER 6, 2005

A Shakespeare Summer for Members of Lopez Troupe *by Leta Currie Marshall*

Roles are being cast in the next few days for *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, the plays chosen by the Community Shakespeare Company (CSC) for its Second Annual Fall Festival, set for November.

What sets this troupe apart is that Shakespeare is performed by kids from elementary through high school, and for some it becomes an important part of their lives.

Over the past few months, two young actors of CSC and Artistic Director Richard Carter traveled far to study their favorite subject. Jessica Stephens and Joey VanEeckhout attended prestigious theater workshops and performed before large audiences; Carter took a master class in Shakespeare's text in Massachusetts.

Stephens, who turns 17 this month, spent four weeks at Oxford studying drama with other high school students. Her all-girl class learned and performed both *Richard III* and *As You Like It*. Stephens's acting ability, deep voice, and commanding presence won her the lead role in *Richard III*.

Senior Joey VanEeckhout attended the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Summer Seminar, one of 60 young people from across the nation to be accepted. He spent two weeks learning to prepare for auditions and working in-depth on a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. He also took in nine plays.

Both Stephens and VanEeckhout will appear in *Twelfth Night* this fall.

Richard Carter has been adapting and directing Shakespeare plays for five years. Having had only one college course on Shakespeare, he felt it was time to learn more. In May he took a week-long master class at Shakespeare & Company, spending 12-hour days studying the text and learning acting, movement, and breathing techniques.

"It was good for me to put on sweats and run around the studio doing goofy things," he said.

Carter said he's found no evidence of anyone else doing what he and the CSC are doing. "I think we're really unique and special," he said. "In fact, I know we are."

While back east, Carter met with a writer and literary agent who agreed to represent his Shakespeare adaptations. Carter believes his work will find a market.

"Shakespeare is being taught in every school throughout the English-speaking world," he said. "We have a method that's proven to make it fun and interesting for both actors and audiences, even for people who've never been introduced to Shakespeare."

Carter's adaptation of *As You Like It* will be performed by kids in 3rd through 7th grade. Young actors in 7th through 12th grade will follow the original script of *Twelfth Night*; some of these students were in the cast when Carter first directed it in March of 1999.



Casts and crew of last year's Community Shakespeare Company Fall Festival productions, Love's Labor's Lost and The Taming of the Shrew.

Carter is assisted in productions by Susan Wilson, parents and other adults from the community. Volunteers and donations are welcome. Casting calls for the Fall Festival are September 6-7 at Woodmen Hall. See "Community Events" on page 2 for times.

Call 468-3516 or visit www.communityshakespeare.org for more information.