

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons 644-1100



(U.S.) Thursday, February 7, 1991

Classic actor explores bard's life

Brian Bedford will present "The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet" on the American Artists Series at 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 10, at Cranbrook's Kingswood auditorium in Bloomfield Hills. Tickets at \$25 are available by calling 851-5044.

By Cathie Broidenbach
special writer

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE went through a mid-life crisis centuries before the pop psych term was even invented, and a



Bedford portrays Shylock from "The Merchant of Venice" during his show, "The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet."

distrust of women accompanied his middle-aged disenchantment.

In Brian Bedford's two-hour festival of Shakespeare's called "The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet," the acclaimed actor—who is a perennial box office favorite at Ontario's Stratford Festival—reveals his insights into the mind of Shakespeare. In a phone interview from Washington, D.C., Bedford said he is surprised how many sophisticated people don't know the facts of the bard's life.

"Shakespeare's father was mayor of Stratford," Bedford said. "William was married at 18. Before he was 21 he had a wife and three children. He had a middle-aged decline similar to what his father experienced."

Bedford's show ties in documented biographical facts about Shakespeare with the sonnets and speeches from the plays to create "a composite portrait of Shakespeare using his own words."

BEDFORD EXPLAINED the show is "not just Shakespeare's greatest hits. What I'm trying to do is create the character of Shakespeare. Everything works to that end. Lots of people see him as a high-falootin', oracular, god-like man. I see him as a very human being who experiences love, hate, ecstasy, despair."

To illustrate the beginnings of what Bedford calls the bard's "middle-aged decline," he quoted the happy country song from "As You Like It": "Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly." He said, "That is the acorn that blooms in succeeding plays into the full-blown nihilism of Lear and Timon."

The classical actor, born and trained in England, spoke with candor of King Lear's despairing



Brian Bedford stars in one-man show about Shakespeare.

speeches and of the bitter exile, Timon. He included some of those speeches in "The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet" and said the bitter language "is like upchuck. It's Shakespeare spewing out venom and bile against life."

Bedford admits it was a challenge to find the real man beneath the approximately 1,200 characters the bard created. "Shakespeare successfully masks his own personality. He wasn't interested in psychological therapy. He wanted to write wonderfully enthralling theater."

Bedford read the sonnets and the plays over and over to find the clues through which he could glimpse the playwright, to find "what might lie straight from the horse's mouth." He cited Hamlet's instruction to the actors who have come to Elsinore castle as such a clue. "It has no narrative value, and it was

uncharacteristic for a Renaissance prince to be an aficionado on acting." In Hamlet's speech, Bedford said, "Shakespeare proclaims his own artistic mandate."

SELECTIONS IN the show include a gallery of Shakespeare's male characters. With only the actor's art (no costumes or sets) and Shakespeare's inimitable language, Bedford brings to the stage such divergent men as Nick Bottom, Romeo, Malvolio, King Richard II, Shylock, Macbeth, Angelo, Prospero, Hamlet and Lear.

Bedford says it took him a year to "compile" the show, which opened at Stratford's Third Stage in September 1989 to rave reviews. Since then the only change to the original show has been adding a little more of Macbeth after Bedford played the ambitious Scotsman last season at Stratford.

Bedford spoke of the particular challenge of making Macbeth relevant to audiences. "I don't think vaulting ambition is something the man in the street connects with. He can relate to jealousy, love and revenge, but Macbeth wants more and more." He added, "If a character is closer to my own experience that makes it a bit easier."

Playing Richard III, who murders for political gain, challenged Bedford, who felt a distance from the hunchbacked king. "I suppose if I'd murdered anyone, I'd find it easier," he said, and explained the dramatic challenge of making the audience feel empathy for Richard. "It's hard to convincingly depict a man who murders."

In more than 31 years as a classical actor, Bedford has become intimately acquainted with Shakespeare's plays, having played most lead male roles at one time or another. He said, "The sonnets (which he

includes in the show) were a comparatively new discovery for me. They comprise an enigmatic documentary of part of Shakespeare's life, and I got on intimate terms with them. They weren't published until Shakespeare was 45, except for two which were leaked out when he was 35."

LAST WINTER Bedford took "The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet" on a successful "20-25 city" international tour that included Canada and Mexico. This winter the itinerary includes 25 cities. Later this month, Bedford will perform his one-man show at Wayne State University's Hilberry Theatre in Detroit.

On tour, every performance is different. "The acoustics of the houses are important and they vary with each date," he said. Audiences also differ in their familiarity with Shakespeare's plots and characters. Many bookings are at regional theaters and universities.

"The university is the perfect Shakespeare class. Lively students have a knowledge and love for Shakespeare," Bedford said. "The point of fact is you don't actually need a knowledge of Shakespeare to find the show interesting. You come, sit there, and I do all the work."

After the tour, Bedford will return to Stratford, where he will play Dogberry in "Much Ado About Nothing" and the lead in "Timon of Athens" on the upcoming Stratford Festival season. He will play Timon for the first time, and despite the play's depressing nihilism, Bedford looks forward to the dramatic challenge and to working once again with director Michael Langham.

24366 Grand River
(3 blocks west of
Telegraph)

DON PEDRO'S OPEN 7 DAYS
537-1450

- Margaritas
- Mexican Beers
- Cocktails
- Lunch Specials
- Curry-Outs • Catering
- Banquet Room

OUR VALENTINE'S SPECIAL...

FEAST FOR TWO!

Includes: Quesadilla, Appetizer, Steak, Chicken or Combination
Fajitas, Fritol Ice Cream

\$19.95 or **\$22.95**

Make Your Reservations Today! Good Thru Feb. 14

AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CUISINE & DECOR

Hampton Inn

27500 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield

ENJOY:

- Deluxe Room Accommodations
- Complimentary Continental Breakfast
- 1 hr. of Our Indoor Pool, Whirlpool, and Exercise Room
- Complimentary Showtime

BRING THIS AD FOR A SWEETHEART SPECIAL OF \$39.00 Plus Tax

Available February 14th thru 17th

Please CALL 356-5500 Direct For Reservations

"Enchanted Winter Evenings"

begin at

Mario's

The Finest in Northern Italian Cuisine

and now...

BALLROOM DANCING

Music performed by
The Billy Prince Quartet
Every Thursday - Saturday Evening

4222 Second Ave., Detroit MI
(313) 833-9425

Smiley Brothers

NEW BECHSTEIN VERTICAL GRAND

Hi-Polished Ebony

DETROIT 875-7100

BIRMINGHAM 847-1177

SPECIALLY PRICED

Hand made in Germany

BIRMINGHAM OPEN SUNDAYS 1 PM - 5 PM

Duffy's

Waterfront Inn

Valentine's Day Specials

Champagne Dinner for 2
\$24.95

Includes: Jumbo Shrimp Dinner
Sirloin Steak Dinner
Chicken Maiton

Includes: Soup of Salad, Vegetable
Potato & Champagne

Appearing Friday & Saturday
BOB POSCH
Comedy Show

CALL FOR RESERVATIONS 363-9469

Buddy's PIZZA

1/2 LB. BURGERS
and the #1 Rated
Pizzeria in Town!

Bring Your "Best Buddy" to BUDDY'S

EVONING 263-3550

FARMINGTON 855-4600

Other Buddy's Locations:

WATER OAK ROYAL OAK

683-3636 549-8000

Bring this ad in for...
\$2 Off Any Large Pizza or Large Antipasto or Large Greek Salad

How to Make Valentine's Day Last a Little Longer

The most romantic day of the year doesn't have to be the **only** romantic day. Enjoy our spacious, luxurious accommodations, champagne and chocolates for a cozy Valentine's Day getaway and we'll give you **50% off** of your next weekend stay. Priced from \$64.95 plus tax, it's easy to make the romance last!

553-0000

Clarion Hotel & Executive Suites

31525 W. Twelve Mile Road
Farmington Hills

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

Thursday February 14th

enjoy **Marhus "Sweetheart Dinners"**

Marhus Red Fox
1414 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham 626-4200

Marhus Sly Fox
1414 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham 626-4200

Marhus 160
1414 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham 626-4200

Marhus Adams Square
1414 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham 626-4200

Marhus at Great Oaks
1414 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham 626-4200

Marhus Troy
1414 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham 626-4200

PASTRY • SHOPS

"Sweetheart Cakes"

633 G. Adams Rd.
Birmingham • 644-1031

160 W. Maple Rd.
Birmingham • 644-1016

6676 Telegraph Rd.
Birmingham • 626-4203

The Palace Grille and Lounge

(In the Palace of Auburn Hills)
377-8455