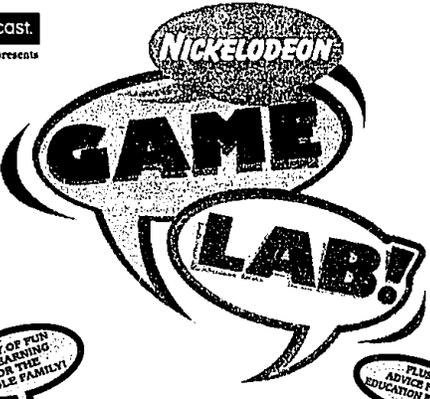


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TITUS

FROM PAGE B1

I don't think you sit five minutes without something happening on a dramatic level. It's been criticized throughout history because scholars believed it wasn't a tight structure and because of the blood and gore. Shakespeare wrote this for his audience. He knew what they wanted much like film today."

In order to hold audiences' attention, Hartman spent two years editing Shakespeare's first tragedy. The story revolves around Titus, a victorious warrior who returns home with captives bent on revenge. Throughout the play *Thamora*, Queen of the Goths, and her evil lover Aaron scheme to bring about the destruction of the conqueror and his family.

"I was trying to make the language more understandable for contemporary audiences. I didn't change it to modern. It's still very Shakespearean," said Hartman. "There's a great deal of mythology so when it wasn't necessary I took it out. If we're to keep Shakespeare alive, people have to understand it. You have to think of you're audience whatever show you're doing. I had my classes read it to see if they could follow it then edited again for timing. Unedited it runs close to three hours, too long for modern audiences. I pared it down so that it's close to two hours."

Hartman's added drama of his own as well. On a fairly simple stage, he casts mood setting lights on costumes designed by Lisa Brawley.

"I'm using unusual and effective lighting - upstage scenes in solid red, silhouettes downstage appear black. I set several of the scenes in evening time because it allows me to use more shadows and blue lighting. Traditionally red ribbons are used to symbolize blood pouring

from the stump when hands are chopped off," said Hartman. "We're using stage blood. It's set in the Elizabethan period and we're making use of violence and gore. We want the staging to be as real as possible. The audience is watching Titus get his hand chopped off instead of him turning his back to the audience. I don't want to reveal any secrets but there are ways to do it. It's definitely not a play for children because of the staging but there's not as much violence as we see daily in the news."

Copy Kopp thinks Shakespeare used violence not just for killing's sake but to illustrate the repercussions of seeking revenge. As Titus, Kopp swings from anger to sadness and finally madness before his death. His background as a former theater teacher at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park enables Kopp to understand the motivation behind the words. Kopp began his studies with Hartman in the early 1990s as Schoolcraft College then went on to earn a degree in English and theater from Western Michigan University. In March he directed *Pippin* at Plymouth Salem High School.

"I'm a big fan of Shakespeare," said Kopp, a Northville resident. "The play was written by a young, angst filled Shakespeare. It's not just violence but intense passions of a Roman general who makes a fateful mistake by killing one of Tamora's sons. The whole play's about justice and vengeance. It's such a huge role. The demands are incredible because he switches emotional states so quickly until finally he's spiraling down in a descent into madness."

Freddie Lane causes most of Titus' downfall as *Thamora*, Queen of the Goths. The plotting captive is out to avenge Titus' sacrifice of one of her sons to the Gods.

Lane majored in acting at the

University of Wisconsin and has been in several productions at Schoolcraft College in the last five years.

"The play is a lot about revenge and for *Thamora* it's the intensity of her motivation," said Lane, co-owner of Benfire Bistro in Northville. "She manipulates people into killing other people to get her revenge."

Benjamin Karl plays one of the characters she wraps around her finger. Aaron is Tamora's malicious lover.

Karl first became interested in theater and Shakespeare during his senior year at Franklin High School in Livonia. He later studied acting with Hartman and now produces independent films.

"He's the most evil character in the play," said Karl of Livonia. "He's at the root of the bad things that happen. He's filled with a lot of hatred because of the racism and prejudice he's withstood because of his skin color."

"I'm a Shakespeare fanatic," said Karl who performed in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* at Schoolcraft College. "I prefer Shakespeare's tragedies which deal more in human truths. It's why he's lasted 400+ years. The language has changed but the tragedies get more into the human psyche and how people react to situations. There's an intense darkness to it that reflects how people not fully matured view things happening around them."

The tragedy of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* is what initially led Hartman to select the play for the opening production of Schoolcraft College Theatre's season.

"It's fine to go and laugh at comedy but good to go and be absorbed in a drama that's going to change the way you think," said Hartman. "I think this is going to end up being one of the most powerful things that Schoolcraft College does."

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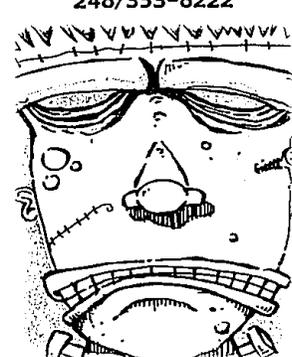
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