



BACKSTAGE Notes

BRINGING THE BARD TO LIFE

As members of Wisconsin's renowned acting company the American Players Theatre (APT), Marcus Truschinski and Tracy Michelle Arnold know first hand what it is like to live and breathe Shakespeare. Truschinski, who has been with APT for three years, is a relative newcomer to the bard's work. Arnold, a 7-year veteran, has the advantage of experience. Despite the

difference in backgrounds, however, both of these professional actors admit that they deal with the same challenges when it comes to performing Shakespeare well.

"I didn't know anything about Shakespeare – nothing," Arnold explains when describing the first time she ever performed one of his plays. A sophomore at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Arnold got the role of 'Julia' in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. "[The director] of the show kind of held my hand through the entire process – walked me through it and taught me a lot." Truschinski stated that he had only done one play and a few Shakespeare workshops before winning

an internship with APT. "It's always hard to do Shakespeare, especially if you're not very used to it."

So what were the biggest challenges for these actors when they started doing Shakespeare? "I guess making the text clear enough to myself so that I knew what I was doing and saying in order to make it clear to the audience," Arnold emphasized. "Lots of times people come out of a Shakespeare production and they didn't understand it." Truschinski agreed. "If you don't understand, they're never going to," he continued. Both actors pointed out, however, that this same difficulty has stayed with them even as they continued to gain more experience. Getting the words and language clear in their own minds, they explained, is vital to their being able to reveal the power and insight of Shakespeare's plays to the audience. It is by experiencing Shakespeare through a live performance that an audience is truly going to understand the greatness of this world famous playwright.



"I think the beauty of Shakespeare," Arnold reflected, "and why we keep watching it year

after year after year is that the human experience has remained the same. Whether it was in 1600 or 2005, people still feel the same way, react the same way to jealousy and anger and hatred and murder – all the stresses that we react to in life now."

The world of acting is full of obstacles and challenges for young artists who work to transform themselves into the characters they are portraying. But Shakespeare's language adds a whole new dimension to this. "I've learned to speak the verse well," Truschinski stressed, "but if you can't do the verse and build the character, then you're really not part of the story." Arnold elaborated further. "I love the process of creating a character, sort of putting life into a soul that's on paper and putting it onstage. That's why I do the work that I do. It's just sort of a bonus that I get to do it with some of the most beautiful language ever written."

Congratulations to Marcus Truschinski and Tracy Michelle Arnold on their recent engagement.

DID YOU KNOW . . .



It is a tradition that whenever the theater is not in use a ghost light burns 24 hours. While there are several explanations – such as warding off dark spirits – the real purpose is so that the first and last person in the theater will not tumble offstage into the orchestra pit.

Is there a draft in here? Not with this cooling and heating system. Based on ancient Roman architectural advancements, the system is designed to provide effective temperature control without the noise. From floor ducts, the air flows up through vents located under the seats.

