

ARTS & CULTURE

ROCKWOOD CENTRE

Music and forest revelations fuel Shakespeare comedy

MICHAEL GURNEY
Arts & Culture Writer

An all-volunteer production of one of Shakespeare's most word-rich comedies will transplant the action from European woodlands to a forested landscape reminiscent of the Sunshine Coast.

The Coast Shakespeare project — which launched with a plain-air reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2022 under the auspices of the Gibsons Public Library — is set to tackle Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It*, early next month. Performances will take place at the Rockwood Centre, Sechelt's 400-seat tree-ringed pavilion, starting July 2.

The prospect of the Forest of Arden set on Canada's West Coast attracted involvement from 22 actors, with ages ranging from 13 to 91. Add crew and other supporters and the number of participants skyrockets to nearly 70 people. Nine of them are slated to form a live orchestra performing authentic Renaissance accompaniment.

"There's more music in this show than any show we've done so far," explained Lise Kreps, the show's musical director (Kreps also oversaw the troupe's previ-

ous full-length productions: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*). "That surprised me because I thought *Twelfth Night* would take the cake for that. In *As You Like It*, there are songs specified by the playwright, but then we added more, of course."

For Kreps, music forms the backbone of Shakespeare's story pitting splendours of country life against the strictures of urban existence. Tunes in the Elizabethan age were more than a mode of storytelling: they were a critical form of communication.

"Music was used for everything," said Kreps. "It was used for entertainment in all its forms. Opera is still in the future, so music and masques with dancing and tableaux are used as the main form of courtly entertainment. Dancing was used by all people of all classes and stations. They would even sing the news to ballad tunes because people knew them so well. It was such an auditory culture because not as many people could read. They had incredible auditory memories and incredible ears."

Actors of Shakespeare's vintage would learn their parts by studying heavily-condensed versions of scripts, and often readied



MICHAEL GURNEY PHOTO
Costumed cast members from *As You Like It* assemble on the grounds of Rockwood Centre in Sechelt.

their lines in mere days. Meanwhile, the growing accessibility of music to the middle classes (and the invention of music printing) contributed to ear-worm crazes that were woven into works for the stage.

"Suddenly you have people with enough time and money to learn the lute and the virginal and the recorders and to hang around after dinner and play and sing for fun," added Kreps, "which is

what me and my friends still do now."

The Coast Shakespeare version of *As You Like It* will include another twist: two duelling Dukes will be portrayed by the same actor. Richard Austin portrays both the genial Duke Senior and his malign counterpart, Duke Frederick, never appearing onstage at the same time.

Disguise and transformation are primary themes of the play. Ducal daugh-

ters Rosalind (played by Melissa Charboneau) and Celia (Julia Lannon) spend half the plot dressed in male garb as the evocatively-named Ganymede and Aliena respectively. Among Shakespeare's heroines, Rosalind's part contains the greatest number of lines.

The elaborate apparel itself presented a challenge for costumer Robyn Faucher, who assembled a team to create 27 unique outfits. Tess Carter, Michelle Cornwall, Nancy Enns, Marcy James, Dianne Lim, Cedar Neufeld and Claire Warszycki set up headquarters at a studio in Davis Bay, repurposing textiles and home accessories into designs informed by historical research.

"We've accumulated a sizeable body of knowledge about Elizabethan fashion," said Faucher. "The style of the garments is authentic, but if you look closer you might recognize everyday fragments more common to

21st-century life. That illusion, and all the hard work it takes to achieve it, is part of the magic of the theatre."

Net proceeds from the production's four performances (plus a public preview) will benefit the Bev. Shaw Literacy Fund administered by the Sunshine Coast Foundation. The 2025 production of *Twelfth Night* accumulated a donation of \$11,000; funds have been used for writer-in-residence programs and other initiatives.

Tickets are available at the door or online for a suggested donation of \$20. Following a public preview performance on July 2 at 7 p.m., the show runs July 3 (7 p.m.), July 10 (2 p.m.), July 10 (7 p.m.) and July 11 (2 p.m.). Browse to coastshakespeare.ca for tickets and more information. Disclosure: a member of the Coast Reporter's arts department has provided creative input to the production.

HEAR WHAT MATTERS MOST

Personalized hearing care on the Sunshine Coast

NOW OPEN IN GIBSONS

GIBSONS
Unit 201 - 1001 Gibsons WaySECHELT
3 - 4330 Sunshine Coast Hwy

Free Hearing Tests

Comprehensive and no obligation.

Expert Hearing Aid Fitting

Personalized solutions for your lifestyle.

Ongoing Care & Support

After-care and ongoing service you can count on.

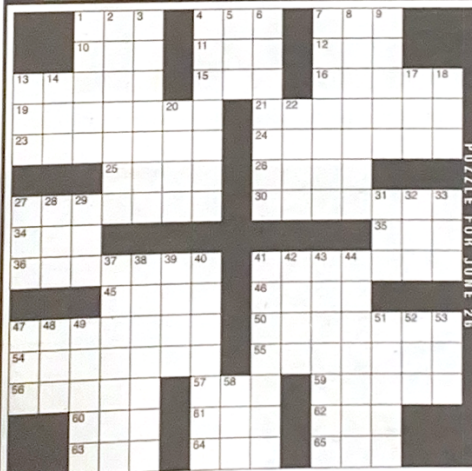
Wax Removal & Accessories

Safe, professional care and quality products.

Book your free hearing test today

604-740-7455

anchorhearing.ca



CLUES ACROSS

1. Tire pressure measurement
4. Request
7. Clairvoyance
10. 007's creator
11. Adult male
12. God of battle (Scandinavian)

13. Cloth spread over a coffin
15. Breeze through
16. Ladyfish genus
19. We all take them
21. Earth's jurisdiction
23. Members of U.S. Navy
24. Rummy-like card game

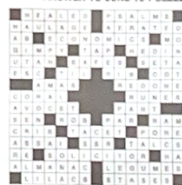
25. Affected by injury
26. Member of a Semitic people
27. Withdrew from a union
30. Woman's cloak
34. Spanish river
35. Prohibit
36. Something you can take

41. Dish soap brand
45. Ottoman military commanders
46. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
47. Makes somber
50. Discuss again
54. A tool to inject
55. Support
56. Informal term for money
57. Catch doing something wrong
59. Prehistoric people
60. Large African antelope
61. Vehicle
62. Georgia rockers
63. High resolution microscope
64. Pitching statistic
65. Attempt

CLUES DOWN

1. Indoor plant
2. Marketable
3. Rather
4. Collected
5. A bag-like structure in a plant or animal
6. Irish hip-hop trio
7. Ageless
8. Course requirements
9. Pokes at
13. TV channel
14. They ...
17. Cooking material
18. Investment account
20. Iron-containing compound
22. Swiss river
27. Small coin (French)
28. Electronic countermeasures
29. Tail
31. Helps little firms
32. Unhappy
33. Midway between northeast and east
37. Glowing
38. Item to be addressed
39. An informal body of friends
40. Intrinsic nature of something
41. Neural structures
42. Brown
43. A place for ships
44. One who sings holiday songs
47. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
48. Scottish town
49. The most worthless parts
51. Sticky
52. Put to work
53. Precursor to the EU
58. Retrospective analysis (abbr.)

ANSWER TO JUNE 19 PUZZLE

GPAG
GIBSONS PUBLIC ART GALLERY

JUNE 25 - JULY 19

PRESENT
TENSEPRESENT TENSE 2026
GPAG MEMBERS' EXHIBITION

OPENING RECEPTION: SAT. JUNE 27, 2PM - 4PM

GIBSONS PUBLIC ART GALLERY
431 MARINE DRIVE
604-886-0531
GPAG.CA

SPONSORED BY

THE PAINTED LADY
after Japanese and ChineseCOAST
LIFESTYLES
NETWORK