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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Thanks, Nancy! Really appreciate your contributions. —Jeff



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'Love's Labour's Lost' explores the meaning of
2 commitment

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3 Brattleboro Union High School Players set Shakespeare's
4 early comedy at a mid-20th-century Ivy League college

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5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 Shakespeare's comedy *Love's Labour's Lost* provides a
7 humorous exploration of how differently men and women view
8 romance.

9 The Brattleboro Union High School Players present their
10 production of the play on Friday, Oct. 17, and Saturday, Oct. 18,
11 in the BUHS auditorium.

12 The Players have set the action in an unnamed Ivy
13 League college in the 1950s–60s. King Ferdinand decides that he
14 and his three close friends must focus on the academic life and
15 forgo the company of women. They swear an oath to each other
16 to follow an ascetic existence. The King decrees that all in the
17 kingdom shall do likewise.

18 Shortly thereafter, the Princess of France and her three
19 ladies-in-waiting arrive on a diplomatic mission to negotiate
20 repayment of a debt her country owes to the King. Though they
21 are lodged far from court due to the decree, the four women are
22 granted an audience with the King.

23 Despite immediately falling in love with the women, the
24 King and his three friends keep their tender feelings hidden,
25 publicly upholding their vow.

26 As the action unfolds, two love letters are misdelivered,
27 confessions of love are overheard, and the clever deceptions
28 enacted by the Princess and her women teach the men that true
29 love must prove itself over time.

30 Miguell Soto, a sophomore, plays the King.

31 “It’s fun to play him,” Soto said. “I get to boss people
32 around. My character wants to make his kingdom the wonder of
33 the world.”

34 The king’s three comrades are portrayed by Jason
35 Donahue, a junior, as Dumaine; Naveen Lalanne, a junior, as
36 Longaville; and Lotte Gannon-Kurowski, a junior, as Berowne.

37 “Dumaine, who falls in love with Katherine, is not that
38 bright, but he acts as if he is,” Donahue said. “He’s loyal to the
39 king to a fault. [At one point] we dress up as beatnik poets to
40 gaslight the women, but they see right through us and choose to
41 deceive us.”

42 “We’re the king’s dudes, his bros,” Lalanne said. “I like
43 my character. Longaville’s the youngest of the four lads and very
44 much of a follower. He’s naive and doesn’t really know what’s
45 going on. He falls in love with Maria. He met her before at a
46 college mixer.”

47 "Berowne talks!" Cannon-Kurowski said. "I have a lot of
48 lines. This is the first time I've played a male character. I have to
49 move like a very confident man and project it out to the
50 audience. Physicality and voice all help."

51 Drea Kurowski, a ninth-grader, portrays the Princess, heir
52 to her father's throne. The character is intelligent and skeptical,
53 but "she goes for the King," Kurowski said.

54 Val Allen, a junior, plays Katherine, one of the princess's
55 ladies-in-waiting, who is pursued by Dumaine.

56 "This is Shakespeare," Allen said. "The mood and the
57 tone help you understand the language. As our director says, 'If
58 you know what your lines mean, the audience will, too.'"

59 Malika Anthes, a junior, portrays Rosaline, another of the
60 ladies-in-waiting. Berowne is her suitor.

61 "She's very smart," Anthes said. "She's mean to Berowne
62 and dismissive of him, although her ill feelings eventually vanish.
63 She's judgmental, witty, and sarcastic, which are fun qualities in a
64 character.

65 "This is a funny romantic comedy," Anthes added. "If I
66 weren't in it, I would go see it."

67 Estella Walker, ninth-grader, plays Maria, the third of the
68 ladies-in-waiting.

69 "Maria is the nicest of the four women," Walker said.
70 "She is pursued by Longaville, and they love each other. She is
71 very proper and keeps her dignity. She reminds me of me."

72 This being Shakespeare, there is a play-within-the-play,
73 and subplots, one of which involves the groundskeeper, a foreign
74 exchange student, and the exchange student's girlfriend.

75 Anika Wiltermuth, a sophomore, portrays Jaquenetta, a
76 serving maid in the King's court.

77 "She is the exchange student's girlfriend," Wiltermuth
78 said. "She is very flirty with him. She knows her place and
79 doesn't draw attention to herself, and respectfully curtsies when
80 she's around the nobles."

81 Dashiell Moyse, a senior, plays Costard, the clown.

82 “He’s the fool,” Moyses said. “He delivers the letters to
83 the wrong people. He mispronounces words. He’s an idiot in the
84 nicest way. I’m happy to do a lighthearted and comedic role.”

85 Director Rebekah Kersten, BUHS teacher of English and
86 Theatre, chose this play for several reasons.

87 “I’ve loved Shakespeare ever since studying *Romeo and*
88 *Juliet* my freshman year of high school,” she said.

89 “This seemed the right time because I have several
90 students who really enjoyed working on some Shakespeare last
91 year, and I wanted to capitalize on that,” Kersten continued.

92 “Also, Shakespeare’s plays lend themselves to flexible casting,
93 always a plus. I knew I wanted to direct a comedy, and *Love’s*
94 *Labour’s Lost* is one of Shakespeare’s lesser-known earlier
95 comedies.”

96 While Shakespeare’s works are universal and timeless,
97 Kersten said, the language can be a barrier to understanding, as it
98 is “so different from how we communicate today.”

99 “Because the central plot follows four young noblemen
100 who decide to swear off women and focus on academic pursuits
101 for three years, the Ivy League college system in the 1950s-60s
102 seemed like a natural fit,” she continued.

103 “Seven of the eight Ivies were all-male at the time,”
104 Kersten said, noting “traditional affiliations between the Ivies and
105 the Seven Sisters colleges.”

106 She said the play’s location names now reflect the Ivy
107 League/Seven Sisters identities. “The gents are from Hanover and
108 the ladies are from Hadley,” she said. “And I added a prologue in
109 which we see the couples meeting each other at an Ivy Mixer at
110 Harvard.”

111 Particularly in this time period, Kersten said, students
112 were routinely bused from their own college to one of the others
113 for dances and other “mixer” events to socialize.

114 Most audience members are familiar with the Ivy
115 League, so that background knowledge provides the audience

116 with context for the various plot points in the show. It helped the
117 actors, as well.

118 “When I framed this story as a battle of the sexes on a
119 college campus in the 1950s, that gave the actors enough access
120 points for them to create their characters,” Kersten said. “The
121 acting style is also very different from the realistic style many
122 students have done in other plays.

123 “Elizabethan acting is larger than life, energetic, and
124 presentational. The actors feel proud of themselves when they are
125 able to understand the lines and deliver them in a way that helps
126 the audience understand them, too.”

127 In Shakespeare’s day, Kersten added, the audience went
128 to “hear” a play, not “see” a play. The focus was on the language
129 — the wit, the banter, the emotion. The focus wasn’t on the sets,
130 costumes, or props, but on the characters and what they were
131 experiencing.

132 “This play is all about the commitments we make in our
133 lives,” Kersten said, “and why we choose to keep them or break
134 them, and how that impacts the people we care about, for good
135 or ill.”

136 She said she wants the audience to leave “thinking about
137 the commitments in their own lives.”

138 “Which ones are they keeping?” she asks. “Which ones
139 are they breaking? Are they balancing their priorities in a healthy
140 way?”

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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141 The Brattleboro Union High School Players present
142 *Love’s Labour’s Lost* on Friday, Oct. 17, at 7 p.m. (ASL-Interpreted
143 Performance) and Saturday, Oct. 18, at 2 p.m. (ASL-Interpreted
144 Performance) and 7 p.m. in the auditorium of BUHS, 131
145 Fairground Rd., Brattleboro. Tickets are \$10 at the door.

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