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Performance swaps character roles

By Seth Schroeder
Verge Editor

For the theater department's performance of the play "Volpone" the gender of nearly every character will be switched.

The play is by Ben Johnson and is a Renaissance era comedy focusing on satire of the rich and upper class.

Director Chris Mitchell, professor of theatre arts, said this type of play is called a comedy of manners. He said while the play may not be as well known to students, it was well received during its time and is very funny.

"It's easy," Mitchell said. "(The rich) are an easy target."

The play opened Wednesday evening and will show at 7:30 p.m. today and Saturday as well as at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Mainstage Theater of the Doudna Fine Arts Center. Tickets will cost \$5 for students and \$12 for non-students.

Mitchell said the plot revolves around titular character Volpone who is very wealthy but is also so very greedy. Volpone pretends to be dying in order to scam three other greedy

characters Voltore, Corbaccia and Corvina out of their own fortunes. Each of the three are in turn trying to get their hands on Volpone's wealth as well.

In the middle of all this scheming is Mosca, Volpone's crafty assistant. Mitchell said Mosca is a very street smart character who plays the other characters off of each other.

Originally most of the characters, including Volpone, were male but Eastern's performance will feature a female lead.

Anna Broughton, a sophomore theater arts major, plays Volpone and said the gender switch has had some unique challenges.

"Pronouns, they're more important than you think," Broughton said.

While the cast tried to change the pronouns in every script, they missed a few which made some lines initially confusing.

Rebecca Berkowicz, a senior history major, plays Notario the court stenographer. She said the gender switch made the play funnier because of the reversal of gender roles. She said there is a scene that originally would

have been sad because it had a man beating his wife, but that same scene is now funny because it is a women beating here husband.

"It's interesting to see how gender changes things," Berkowicz said.

In addition to the gender change, Mitchell said the play has also gone through a setting change. The play is originally set in Renaissance era Venice, Italy but is now set in Venice Beach, Fla. In 2009.

Mitchell said he chose 2009 because it was the same time as the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme and that Venice Beach is very close to where Madoff's wife settled after the scandal. He said both the original and new location have Mediterranean architecture and pre-show music will feature 2009 pop music.

"Grifters go across time," Mitchell said. "The play is remarkably modern. We kind of see how the more things change, the more they stay the same."

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