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Graduate Company stages classic comedy 'Scapin'

Montgomery Advertiser - Montgomery, Ala.

Subjects: Festivals; Theater

Author: Robyn Bradley Litchfield

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Document Text

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival's Graduate Company has done nothing but clown around the past few weeks. They've even trained with a Ringling Brothers Circus clown expert.

The second-year master of fine arts students have been rehearsing for "Scapin," the classic comedy that previews at 10 a.m. Tuesday through Friday and opens at 8 p.m. Friday at ASF.

Most of the performances will be during SchoolFest, which is for grades seven to 12. SchoolFest will be weekdays through Feb. 9, and public performances will be weekends through Feb. 4.

Graduate Company member Robert Barry Fleming said he and fellow actors have had a blast in rehearsals.

"Scapin' is vaudeville meets commedia with a little shtick," he said.

The adaptation of Moliere's work by Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell is set in 14th-century Venice. But it includes plenty of 20th-century pop culture and movie references, Fleming said.

Scapin is a clever servant who loves to outwit his masters and create a lot of comic confusion.

The tale involves two guys who fall in love with girls whose fathers have other men in mind for their daughters.

These young men entrust their happiness to Scapin, who has fun scheming, playing dirty tricks and starting rumors.

Adding to the comedy is Sylvestre, Scapin's straight man, said MFA student Chris Ensweiler, who plays Sylvestre.

"Sylvestre is not stupid he's just not very quick," said Ensweiler, who describes Sylvestre as the Art Carney to Scapin's Jackie Gleason.

One of the challenges for Ensweiler is it involves such precise comedy. But the cast has been trained by professionals including their director, John Preston.

Preston is an MFA graduate and a member of ASF's resident company.

"John is adept at physical comedy, and he has shared what he knows with us," Ensweiler said.

Joining Ensweiler and Fleming in "Scapin" are Michael Reilly, Jenny Wales, Scot Mann, Devin Haqq, John Triana, Mendy Garcia, Blake Boles, Jill Asmus, Jeff Evans and David Folchi.

Ensweiler said, "This has been a great deal of fun as well as a good learning experience."

WANT TO GO?

What: "Scapin" by the Graduate

Company of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival

When: Previews at 10 a.m. Tuesday through Thursday.

Opens at 8 p.m. Friday; regular run is at 10 a.m.

weekdays through Feb. 9, at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday,

and at 2 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday through Feb. 4

Where: Alabama Shakespeare Festival in the Blount

Cultural Park

Cost: Tickets are \$15 for public performances

Information: 271-5353

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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