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ASF graduate troupe stages preview of New York showcase

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Author: Robyn Bradley Litchfield

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As their intensive two-year training concludes, the Graduate Company's future moves center stage.

It's time to show the nation's theater community what they've accomplished in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival/University of Alabama Master of Fine Arts/Professional Actor Training Program.

Company members -- eight actors and a stage manager -- have prepared a showcase they will take to New York City on April 30.

But Montgomery gets a sneak peek. The company will perform a showcase benefit at 7:30 p.m. Monday in the Octagon. Proceeds from the \$20 tickets will help cover their trip to the Big Apple.

"The showcase allows us to introduce ourselves to the New York scene," said MFA actor Mendy Garcia. "We'll be seen by casting agents and producers, who will have a chance to see our work."

During the past few months, the Class of 2001 has staged its own production, the comedy "Scapin," and its members have portrayed a variety of roles in ASF's other productions.

The company's showcase, however, features an assortment of scenes and monologues the student actors have selected for themselves, she said. The benefit bonus will be a variety show-type performance that includes members of the MFA Class of 2002.

Second-year MFA actor John Triana said he is looking forward to the New York Showcase for two reasons -- he grew up in Queens, N.Y., and the city is the mecca of theater acting.

"It is the place to be," said Triana, who plans to return to New York after graduation. "Although there is great theater going on around the country, it is the place everyone goes."

During the showcase, Triana will perform a scene from "Blade to the Heat" and a poem by Puerto Rican poet Miguel Pinero called "The Menuedo Cuchifrito Love Affair."

One of the scenes Garcia has selected is from a play titled "Love Lemmings."

"The character is a woman who is on her first date after her husband has left her," Garcia said. "We all choose characters that we feel show

us well and are also fun."

Joining Triana and Garcia in this year's group of graduates

actors are Robert Barry Fleming, Jenny Wales, Michael

Reilly, Devin Haqq, Scot Mann and Chris Ensweller.

They are joined by a student focusing on stage management. Most years, the MFA classes at ASF have two stage managers, but this year Jen Nelson has been on her own. There also are three theater management

students, Adam Miller, Jeremy Thompson and Jeff Gibson, who will not be going on this class trip.

News of the trip seems to be spreading, Garcia said.

"What is really nice is that for the last few years, the

Alabama Shakespeare Festival has taken wonderful

showcases up to New York," Garcia said. "The word is

out, and everyone is excited about it."

MFA graduates include everyone from Thomas Gibson,

the co-star of ABC's "Dharma & Greg" and Michael Emerson, a 1995 graduate who landed the title role in "Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde," and has since starred opposite Kevin Spacey in "The Iceman Cometh" and Uma Thurman in "The Misanthrope"

Robyn Bradley Litchfield, who covers food and arts for the Montgomery Advertiser, can be reached by calling 240-0182 or faxing 261-1548 or e-mailing rlitchfi@montgomeryadvertiser.com

WANT TO GO?

What: Alabama Shakespeare

Festival's Graduate Company Benefit

When: 7:30 p.m. Monday

Where: The Octagon at ASF in the Blount Cultural Park

Cost: \$20 for general admission

Information: 271-5353

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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