



The Rude Mechanicals, Inc.

Joshua Engel, Executive Director

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Girls! Girls! Girls!

Rude Mechanicals present all-female production of *Much Ado About Nothing*

January 1, 2007 Laurel, MD. Alright, so it's a cheap gimmick. But what better way to bring out the theatre-goers during the dark of winter than a show with girls kissing? And if anyone can pull it off with style, it's Laurel, Maryland's "witty and avant-gardish" Rude Mechanicals Shakespeare troupe.

Still, it's a tricky business to walk the tightrope of the gender-bending divide. It wasn't part of director (and Rude Mechanicals founder) Joshua Engel's original plan. "There are only four female roles in the play," Engel laments, "but there were so many wonderful actresses who came to audition. I just didn't want to have to call that many women back and tell them 'no'," he jokes.

Jokes aside, Engel threads the minefield of clichés with panache, and his lively *Much Ado* manages to be both timely and touching, despite a weighty premise. The year is 1943, in the thick of World War II. A troupe of actresses, bereft of their male counterparts (who've all joined up), decide to put on a play by themselves. With thousands of American troops in harm's way in the Middle East right now, it strikes a familiar chord.

But Engel reserves the ponderous explanation for his program notes. In his sprightly interpretation, the funny takes center stage and his actresses make bales of hay with Shakespeare's slapstick and sexual innuendoes. The drama is judicious, and the jokes are laugh-out-loud funny.

The Rude Mechanicals established early-on a reputation for innovative, enjoyable stagings; their goal is to enable the modern theater-goer access to Shakespeare's stories without sacrificing his carefully chosen words. While adapting the structure, period and characters, the "Rudes," as they are called by their fans, remain faithful to Shakespeare's text.

Their most recent production, *Antony and Cleopatra*, was set in a theater's prop room, and each of the actors on stage performed a dual role. One was Shakespeare's character; the other was the actor playing that character. A gripping study in lust and politics, the show received rave reviews and played to full houses throughout its tour of Baltimore, Greenbelt and Washington DC.

Last season's flagship, *King John*, one of Shakespeare's least-performed works, also broke previous attendance records. In classic Rude Mechanicals form, Shakespeare's melodramatic snoozer was transformed into a light-hearted, Monty Python-esque romp through the tenure of England's least popular monarch.

Much Ado About Nothing directed by Joshua Engel. **January 19, 20, 26, 27 2007 @ 8PM Sellers Theater, Laurel, MD \$10. February 2,3 2007 @ 8PM; February 4, 2007 @ 4PM Meadow Mill, Baltimore, MD \$15. February 9, 10 2007 @ 8PM DC Arts Center, Washington, DC \$15. For more information visit <http://www.rudemechanicals.com>.**

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