

# A&E LIGHTHOUSE

The Barnstable Patriot

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A BEACON FOR ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT ON CAPE COD

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## Shakespeare in words and music proves a delight

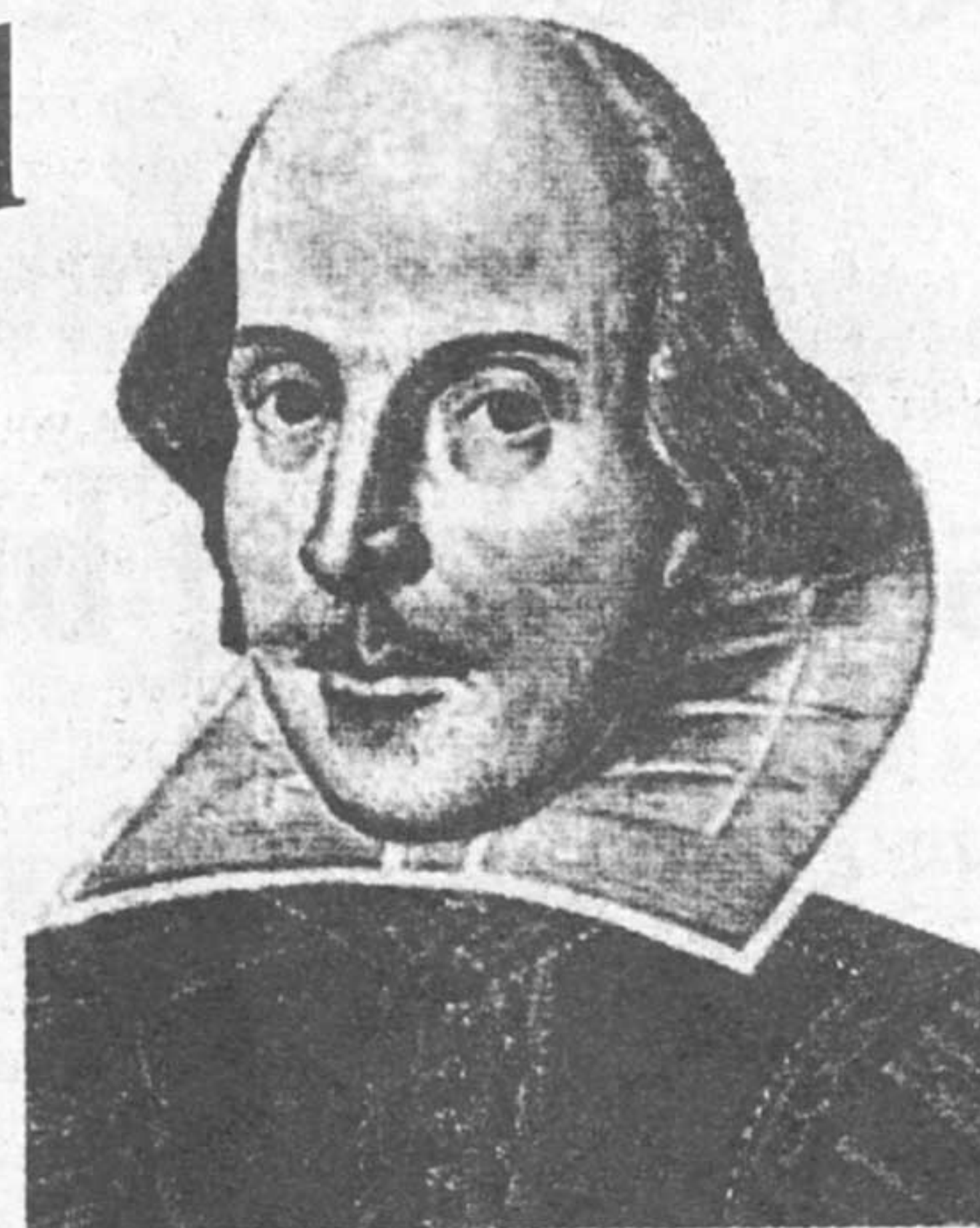
Stages Theatre Co. honors bard in scene and song

By Bethany Gibbons  
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"On love's light wings" does the Stages Theatre Company delight the audience with its latest offering, *A Heart to Love*. From intimate café tables dressed in linens and accessorized with delicate flowers, assorted cheeses and glasses of wine, patrons drink in romantic selections from Shakespeare. The company presents this well-known material with talent, craft and emotion, leaving the audience at the Community of Jesus in Orleans heart-warmed and thoroughly entertained.

Scenes from seven Shakespeare plays are performed, and each speaks to various forms of love. The company's selections demonstrate love between man and woman, between brother and sister, between father and daughter and even between bosom buddies. Four choral singers, who also play many roles in the show, perform beautiful songs between scenes.

Instrumental accompaniment is in the form of oboe, bassoon, harpsichord and piano. Sister Anne Furst, Sister Angela Graham, and David Chalmers play with grace and practiced excellence. The trained musical, including vocal, talents of the Community of Jesus members really shine in this presentation. Listening to Brother Richard Cragg, a tenor, sing "Orpheus With His Lute," is alone worth the price of admission. Cragg, Rachel McKendree, Blair Tingley and Luke Nor-



man create magic together with "April is in My Mistress' Face." Norman, a bass-baritone, is very moving in his rendition of "Come Away, Come Away Death."

The company excels in every scene they tackle. The diction of every actor is excellent, and makes the sometimes hard-to-follow Shakespearean English audible, accessible, and fun to hear, Ellen Ortolani as Celia and Rachel McKendree

as Rosalind start the night off on a high note with their funny scene from *As You Like It*. Things only get better from there, with a passionate portrayal of Act IV, Scene III from *Julius Caesar*. Brother Stephen Velie as Marcus Brutus and Bradford Lussier as Cassius wrench every drop of emotion and intensity from their characters.

The balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* would be hard to omit from such an evening, and David Bushnell and Rachel McKendree translate the youthful abandon and devotion of the young lovers very well. McKendree is relaxed and natural as Juliet, while Bushnell's Romeo sweeps the audience away with his elated, energetic performance.

Chris Kanaga and Blair Tingley deliver the most intense performances of the evening with their stirring depiction of Claudio and Isabella's death-row dialogue from *Measure for Measure*. Kanaga's Claudio is shadowed by an almost visible cloud of doom, while Tingley, too, wrestles with her fate.

The evening ends with abundant laughter, as the company wraps up the show with a hi-

larious scene from *Henry IV* and a fast-moving, funny scene from *As You Like It*. A collection of sonnets is then performed from the four stages surrounding the audience.

Director David Haig has assembled a gifted cast that is able to present many characters, and do so with energy and skill. Haig creates a ballet of sorts with his creative use of the entire space and pas de deux between musical interludes and theatrical moments.

The company knows how to present a relaxing, entertaining evening of theatre. From the friendly golf cart drivers that meet audience members at their cars to offer them a ride to the door, to the warm handshake and glass of wine or Perrier that greets one inside, this is how theater should be. This magical evening of Shakespeare is not to be missed.

*A Heart to Love, Scenes and Songs of Shakespeare* is presented by the Stages Theatre Company at the Community of Jesus, Rock Harbor, Orleans, July 14, 15 and 16 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$30 for adults, \$25 for seniors and free for those 18 and under. Call 508-240-2400 for reservations.

## Experience ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

# An absorbing taste of Shakespeare

## THEATER Review

By Debi Boucher Stetson

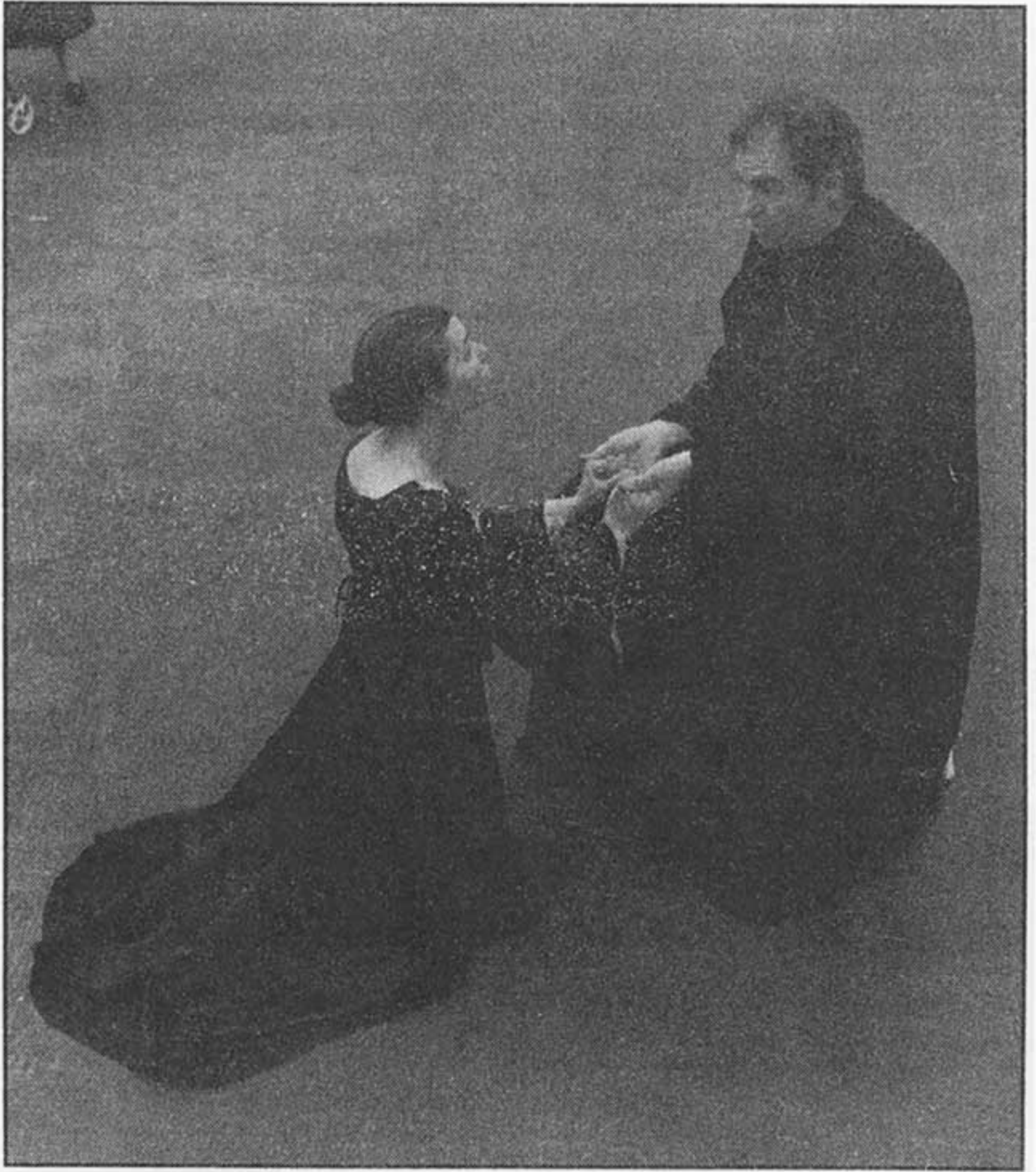
If you love Shakespeare, you'll love Stages Theatre Company's "A Heart to Love." If you're less than familiar with some of Shakespeare's work, you'll leave wanting more. And I challenge anyone to see this show and not go out the next day in search of a book of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Director David Haig does Shakespeare – and all of us – a great service in this unusual production, presented on multiple stages at the perimeters of a room in which the audience sits dinner-theater style at tables of four. As a bonus, they are served mineral water and wine, with plates of fruit and cheese to nibble on – surely an atmosphere that would have pleased the Bard.

The show is a dynamic mix of scenes from Shakespeare's plays and lesser known songs performed separately between the scenes. All explore a common theme of love – love between a man and a woman, love between friends, love between a father and daughter, brother and sister. And all succeed in somehow bringing a contemporary feel to the scenes while staying true to the language – not an easy feat.

There are seven scenes altogether in this fast-moving production, and a musical interlude takes the place of an intermission. The show begins with a scene from "As You Like It," and neatly wraps up with a scene from the same play. Scene 2 is from "Julius Caesar" and Scene 3 – arguably the best – is from "Romeo and Juliet."

Following the interlude is a scene from "The Tempest" followed by "Measure for Measure," "Henry IV" and finally "As You Like It," each preceded by a musical number. Among the songs, "April Is in my Mistress' Face" is a particular standout, with lovely harmonizing by Rachel McKendree, Blair Tingley, Br. Richard Cragg and Luke Norman. The same musically gifted quartet performs "If Love be Blind" to beautiful effect.



Stages Theatre Company's "A Heart to Love" is a dynamic mix of scenes from Shakespeare's plays and lesser known songs.

The cast of nine is incredibly talented, and handle their multiple roles adeptly and with often stunning transformations. Rachel McKendree makes a wonderful Juliet, bringing new and fresh life to the classic balcony-scene lines; she's also terrific as Rosalind in "As You Like It." David Bushnell is perfectly cast as the besotted Romeo, at times provoking laughter from the audience with his helpless love. He also does a fine job as Harry to Luke Norman's hilarious Falstaff in "Henry IV."

Br. Stephen Velie and Bradford Lussier play off one another with real intensity as Brutus and Cassius in a grittily emotional scene from "Caesar," and Chris Kanaga shines as the terrified Claudio in "Measure for Measure," in which Blair Tingley is riveting as his enraged sister Isabella.

Ellen Ortolani is delightful as the excitable Celia in the opening "As You Like It" scene, morphing later into Prospero's earnest daughter Miranda in "The Tempest" and returning in the very funny and well done

Scene 5, Act 2 of "As You Like It."

Director David Haig does a fine job weaving all the parts together so the production flows; part of that is his own role as narrator, introducing each scene to give the audience context.

The "Sonnet Blast" listed at the end of the program is mystifying until it unfolds, with one actor after another appearing in turn at stages around the room to recite one of Shakespeare's heartfelt, clever and poignant sonnets. It will make you want to reread the ones you once knew and read more, slowly, to absorb their meaning, knowing they are all – as most everything is – about love.

### If you go...

**What:** "A Heart to Love: Scenes and Songs of Shakespeare"

**When:** 7:30 p.m. July 14-16

**Where:** Paraclete House, Rock Harbor, Orleans, 508-255-3999