

PLAY TIME

Silicon Valley Shakespeare continues to captivate with fresh takes on the Bard's works.

By Anh-Minh Le



Now in its 20th season, Silicon Valley Shakespeare (svshakespeare.org)—aka, SV Shakes—is enticing audiences with a series of productions around the theme of Old, New and Much Ado. “Each year, I try to give the audience a variety,” says Artistic Director Angie Higgins. While the 2018 lineup includes plays that she describes as old (*As You Like It*) and new (*The Hood of Sherwood*), the through line is the theater company’s contemporary approach. “I love the classics, but what I’m more interested in is being innovative with them and drawing the audience in with concepts that they find relevant,” explains Higgins, whose 2006 directorial debut with SVS was a rendition of *The Taming of the Shrew* set in the Wild West.

April 27 to 29, SVS is putting on its spring fundraiser: *Shakespeare’s Most Wanted*, which combines the dramatist’s words with original writing by Doll Piccotto (who, along with Higgins, will be directing the show). “We did it in 2007 and 2009, and I wanted us to mount something that harks back to our past history, that our audience really enjoyed,” says Higgins. In the production, Agent Marlowe, a *CSI*-type agent, counts down 10 Shakespeare villains while incorporating scenes from various plays—“giving the lowdown on each character and why they’re so horrible,” notes Higgins.

All proceeds from *Shakespeare’s Most Wanted*

will benefit SVS’ free Shakespeare in the Park, which this year is a fairytale version of *As You Like It* (June 8 to 24). “We really want to make the experience of live theater accessible to families so it’s not becoming an elitist art that only some people can afford,” says Higgins. In fact, admission is free to all SVS performances for those ages 17 and under. And the theater company offers internships—providing onstage and behind-the-scenes training for high school and college students—as well as camps and after-school programs.

The season’s later productions are *The Hood of Sherwood* (July 27 to Aug. 31), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Aug. 3 to Sept. 2). The former features a brand-new Doug Brook script, commissioned by SVS—hence it will be a world premiere—and the latter has been updated to take place during the Roaring ’20s. Although the crowd-pleasing *Much Ado* has been done before by SVS, this time around, given the era (a nod to the 20th season), according to Higgins, it will “have a sexy flair to it”—aided no doubt by composer Phil Surtees’ original jazz music performed with Shakespeare lyrics. “As an artist, you always want to bring something new to the table and excite audiences,” says Higgins. “That’s what the company has been doing for years, and that’s the mission I tried to pick up [in 2014] when I took the helm.”