Embracing Shakespeare

Shakespeare in Love, SpeakEasy Stage Company, Wimberly Theatre, Calderwood Pavilion, Boston Center for the Arts, through February 18.

By Jules Becker

Did Shakespeare ever experience writer’s block? Did Christopher Marlowe prove a secret occasional influence? Did Shakespeare have an

George Dolezly and Jennifer Ellis in SpeakEasy Stage Company production of Shakespeare in Love (© Nile Harmer/Hile Scott Shoes)

All together?
The South End’s myriad of neighborhood associations talk mergers

By Michelle D. Hamel

Residents of both the South End and other downtown areas have long been perplexed that the South End has 16 individual neighborhood associations, some covering as few as three or four square blocks, while other neighborhoods have one or two associations to represent them. The idea of consolidating as a means of pooling resources and increasing force with the city has arisen periodically, and over 20 years ago, the South End Forum came together to discuss and tackle concerns that are common across the South End, such as public works and traffic.

Consolidation talk became more concrete recently when the New York Streets Neighborhood Association, which formed to serve residents of the Ink Block complex, began the process of joining the Old Dover Neighborhood Association (ODNA), which had previously included that area. ODNA president

Continued on page 2

Local news
for and about Boston’s best neighborhood

Mala is good to the core

Mala, Arts Emerson production presented by Huntington Theatre Company at Roberts Theatre in Calderwood Pavilion, Boston Center for the Arts, through February 4, 617-993-8600 or bostontheatrescene.com

By Jules Becker

Melinda Lopez returned to her two-culture family—her Cuban roots and her husband’s Jewish traditions—once again last year in her own work. The veteran actress and Huntington Theatre Company playwright-in-residence had already tapped that singular combination in her affectionate award-winning play “Storia Fresca” (Huntington’s Theate 2014 premiere, with IRNE and Boston honors). Now she’s reprising her more recent autobiographically influenced work—the one-act play “Mala,” a 2016 premiere at Arts Emerson’s Paramount Center—as a presenta

Continued on page 3

Friends of the South End Library

SUBMITTED BY MARLÈNE NEGRIUS

The next scheduled South End Writers series speaker is historian Lauren Perez, executive director of the South End Historical Society (Feb. 25, Boston’s South End, a postcard history series). State Representative Byron Rushing (March 27, My Life and Debt in the Massachusetts State House), biographer Megan Marshall (May 8, Elizabeth Bishop: A Miracle for Breakfast), and novelist Allegra Goodman (May 22, The Chalk Artist).

Boston Public Library (BPL) president, David Leonard, will attend the FUSEL Annual Meeting on Tuesday, January 30, at 6:30 PM, when you, the audience, will elect a

Continued on page 4

Check us out online at
www.mysouthend.com
twitter.com/SouthEndNews
facebook.com/SouthEndNews
Shakespeare
Continued from page 1

ML

Their music is ready to contribute to the movie.
Fans of the enjoyable 1998 film “Shakespeare in Love” (1999 best picture Oscar) will recall these and other intriguing speculations of that light-hearted film. In 2014, Lee Hall (“Billy Elliot” the musical) adapted the witty Tom Stoppard-Marc Norman screenplay for the stage. While faithful to the script, Hall’s play focuses more on the challenges of playwriting and the world of the theater than on the movie’s famed up romance between Shakespeare and the merchant’s daughter turned talented actress Viola de Lesseps.

Pure romantics may prefer the emotionally stronger and more tautly focused film to the theater confounded-as-in-intended adaptation. Even so, SpeakEasy Stage Company, under the remarkable direction of Scott Edmiston, has made the Oldwood Pavilion premiere theater to embrace.

A kind of love at first sight for the production’s winning design where audience members enter the Wimberly Theatre to behold Jenna McFarland’s Lord’s wooden stage set that hearkens back to the Elizabethan Age. Her design is flexible enough to handle the demands of the play’s 1593 rival venues—Hertford’s Rose Theatre and Richard Burbage’s Curtain Theatre. Audacious timing—with the assistance of Judith Chalmers’ expressive choreography and period movement and Ted Hewlett’s sharp fight direction—ball bemosing and pub revelry and face-offs come to wild life.

Rachel Padula-Shafill establishes a kind of design bridge between the Renaissance and modern times with a repertoire bringing height and leaner and casual counter on her one hand and stylish leather attire on the other—a combination that is striking if not exactly enlightening. Keon Perlow’s light shining possess the essence of a master painter’s careful brushstroke.

Visual enhancements notwithstanding, “Shakespeare in Love” heart ultimate resides in its story and the way in which the members deliver its courting of the audience. Shakespeare buffs will know that the great playwright wrote with striking facility, but Edmiston’s ensemble makes the play’s heavily examination of supposed writer’s block—true in the film—a satisfying scenario. Newton native George Olney—nearly a universally season Spectacle and Boston debut—does catch the early frustration and difficulty that both film and play ascribe to Shakespeare as he writes a sonnet or works on a play initially entitled “Roméo et Bébèle, the Prince’s Daughter.”

At the same time, he needs to be more dynamic as Shakespeare comes into his own as a theatrical force. Where contemporary dramatica Christopher Kfi Madsen plays a fairly minor role in the film, here he does take on a pivotal position from time to time—especially as a kind of Othello de Bourgeois prompting Shakespeare to deliver a poem that will enter the heart of|Roméo-like Viola de Lesseps.

Eddie Shields, a gifted actor who has been demonstrating impressive range in the lines of SpeakEasy’s area premieres of “Casa Valentina” and “A Christmas Carol,” stars as Shakespeare’s right-hand man, his inspiration. Jennifer Ellis is equally striking as Viola—whether disguised and calling herself “Thomas Kins as in order to act in a Shakespeare play, sharing a passionate romance with Roméo or regaining herself to a match made with relatively poor Lord Wessex, played with wit and understatement by Lewis Worth. She naturally moves between the boy and men called for from acting and theatre and the captivatingly charming Viola (think of the heroine of Night’s “Twelfth Night!”) that is meant to be seen of Shakespeare’s inspiration. Ellis proves as much of a standout here as Cwynn Fowl in the film.

There are several strong performances in support as well. Jose Hinson takes off as poetess Arial. McFarland is delightful as the maid. Ashley Paisley is a standout as the boy who is a man. David Wollman and Olewicz are excellent as the maid. Richard L. Wall plays a poet in time-

Service Guide Ads
Get Results
For more information please call:
617.464.7280
Theater
Continued from page 1

tion by Huntington at the Calderwood Pavilion. Once again, under the seamless guidance of Arts Emerson artistic director David Dower, she is poetically alluding to the experiences of her own Cuban-American family and her husband's.

While this very thoughtful play has a Lopez persona speaking vividly of the passing of a striking father and focuses largely on the care-giving of a Lopez persona for her dying mother, it also speaks significantly of her husband's religious observance at the passing of his parents and their daughter’s interest in the Jewish customs related to mourning.

'Mala' wisely coaxes humor—foreexample, detail about the caregiver's four earlier boyfriends (three Jewish and one a ginger) — with cancer—such challenges as her mother’s subdural hematoma surgery — right from the start.

The chronicle daughter — a kind of Lopez persona—advises knowingly about caregivers’ cell phones and details the difficulties of convincing her proud and brough-minded mother Frances to go to the MGH emergency room when necessary. If you suspect that this piece might end up a feel-good tribute to beleaguered children helping their ailing parents, think again.

Lopez is not depicting the daughter in question as a totally sweet, all-knowing daughter. In fact, the dying 92 year old mother unfairly accuses her of being “Mala,” Spanish for bad —bad to the core, in fact. Although she becomes the attentive Good Cop to her rarely visiting scientist sister Bad Cop, she does have moments of high tension and humor with Frances.

Still, the Good Cop grows closer and closer to her terminally ill mother (cancer) through long stretches of isolation with nothing but the Spanish telenovelas that she is perhaps the best dressed in the Hispanic community. Although they are beautifully enhanced by Kristine Holmes’ white dominated scenic design, Scott Pinkney’s nuanced lighting and Anahat Gault’s evocative sound design.

Lopez' heart-felt narrative also looks at the mother's emigration from Cuba and her strong connection with her native culture— including the remembrance of a Cuban ballad. By contrast, there is the loving recall of father-in-law Bernie and mother-in-law Bobbie—the latter who would note that 1972 was not only the time when Columbia embarked on an exploration for Ferdinand and Isabella but also the year Jews were banned from Spain as a result of the Inquisition.

Mala, who believes in Darwin (some of the characters will recall Lopez' provocative 2011 IRNE Award play 'From Orchids to Octopi') with Underground Railway Theaters at Central Square Theatre, does speak with respect to the Jewish custom of covering mirror and memorial candles during the seven days of mourning.

At the same time, the gifted actress smoothly interweaves other peoples' stories signaled by the smart projection design of Ari Herzog. For example, Lopez convincingly becomes a short Italian-American hairdresser named Gina, dealing with a hospice factor. Eventually Lopez—through Mala’s reminiscent recollections and observations—admits that nothing fully prepares anybody for dealing with the formidable responsibilities of caring for a dying parent, challenges that of course confront all people.

Although the unassuming daughter remarks that “Death doesn’t make one wise,” she does warmly advise fellow caregivers and all human beings alike, “You are capable of more than you thought possible.” If Mala' the play still seems less extraordinary than Lopez's deeply heartfelt performance, it does engagingly affirm the need to embrace the value of caring in the face of human limitations and mortality.
All Together
Continued from page 1

Ken Smith said, “It isn’t a complete merger, yet, but the intention is we’re going to have oneday be one association again. We’ve stopped representing and presenting our Old Doverson members that live in the northside of East Berkeley and will continue to do so.”

He explained further, “The benefit isn’t to Old Doverson, rather it’s to the residents themselves. It benefits them to belong to a group that meets regularly and is working effectively with city officials and local police to improve the safety and security of the neighborhood. We also have time for developers and city officials by presenting to this neighborhood once or twice at separate venues.”

Steve Fox, who heads the Rutland Square Neighborhood Association, and the South End Forum, commented on the pending merger. “Old Doverson is a part of Old Berkeley, but it’s separate from us. I think it’s important to have that relationship.”

According to Fox, possible merger discussions are also taking place among the Old Berkeley Neighborhood Association (OBNA) and WeCo Square Area Neighborhood Association (WSANA), Clarewood Neighborhood Association (CNA), and Hurley Block Neighborhood Association (CSNA), and Rutland Street Neighborhood Association and Rutland Square Neighborhood Association.

Fox stated, “I think it’s important to have those relationships. It’s important to have that communication.”

He added, “I think it’s important to have that communication. It’s important to have that relationship.”

For more information, please see the South End News website.

Letters Policy
The South End News welcomes letters to the editor.

All letters must be signed and accompanied by a mailing address and phone number.

Because of space limitations, letter should not be more than 200 words.

E-mail: letters@southendnews.com

Cleaning

Cleaning by Judy
617-501-9645
Calendar

South End/Lower Roxbury Police Panel Meeting

Monday, January 29, 2018
6:00 - 8:00 PM
Deaconess - Community Service Office, 550 Harrison Avenue

13th Annual Ellis Progressive Dinner

Monday, February 5, 2018
5:30 PM - 9:30 PM
The Belfairs, 344 Tremont Street
The Ellis South End Neighborhood Association will hold its 13th Annual Ellis Progressive Dinner on Monday, February 5th. It's a marvelous way to meet new neighbors and sample gourmet offerings from our neighborhood restaurants.
More at www.ellisneighborhood.org

Heart of Gold Scholarship Event 2018

Thursday, February 8, 2018, 6:00 - 8:00 pm
Esquire, 700 Harrison Ave, Boston
The BPSNA is having its annual fundraiser for its South End Scholarship. This is our 16th year. Last year we raised over $60,000, and awarded over $32,000 to 15 recipients. For the last 10 years, our neighborhood association has awarded scholarships ranging from $1,000 to $2,500 to over 45 South End high school graduates to pursue their higher education.

Tickets are $90 in advance, $75 at the door.
This year we will be enjoying delicious Spanish tapas, wine, beer and cocktails courtesy of Estrogen Tapas Bar. Enjoy live music and bid on lots of exciting items at our live and silent auctions. All proceeds benefit the Scholarship Fund of BPSNA.
http://www.blackcatbostonfund.org

Dog Lady

Continued from page 1

not allow dogs in the indoor areas where the bedrooms are. I am sure with leaving Charlie alone in the car for a few minutes when the weather is mild in the spring and late winter, I would not consider it in the summer when the car heats up quickly! Do you have any suggestions?

—Darlene

Dear Darlene,

Summer seems so far away! Yes, we should always keep up the conversation about not leaving dogs in cars on hot or cold days. Actually, you really shouldn’t leave your dog in a car unsupervised, and you should never tie up your dog outside unsupervised in a strange place.

In dire straits along the highway, Dog Lady would probably suggest a fellow looking to rent walking with a dog in the outdoor area to hold darling’s leash for a see while she runs like lightning to the WC. For the most part, with the exception of Hitler and those who train dogs to fight, dog people are good people.

You have been traveling with Charlie for many years. You must have worked out your own routine. Dog Lady invites readers to share about this! Do you have your dogs tied up in the car while you run to do an errand?

Dear Dog Lady,

Please advise if there is some sort of ramp available for older dogs. Or can we easily build something? Our Airedale is 12 and can’t get those crazy legs going on the steps up to the laundromat in the garage.

—Gloria

Dear Gloria,

Build it and your valuable Airedale will come. Ramp covered with carpet for aged paws to grip are easy to construct and a blessing for elders. Until your dog gets the hang of how it works, line the ramp with freeze-dried liver or boiled chicken chunks as motivation to use the ramp.

When Dog Lady’s dog Shorty became quite elderly, she bought him two steps from a dog catalogue to so he could climb into the bed. Despite the treat motivation, Shorty persisted all entreaties to ascend this stairs to heaven. He wanted to be picked up and placed on the bed, which eventually is what happened.

Write askdoglady@gmail.com

Get local and advertise your property in the South End News.

Call Jeff at (617) 464-7280 ext. 202 or email: sales@southendnews.com.
We are the future of the LGBT community.

"The world still has its challenges but things are getting better. From the way we first met on line to marriage equality to our daughter's upcoming Quinceañera our life together is more fulfilling every day. We keep up with events and entertainment on EDGE, because that's where we see our future at its brightest."

Giacomo's Ristorante

COME BACK TO GIACOMO'S!

After extensive renovations this South End favorite has reopened and serving the neighborhood. Serving dinner nightly at 5pm. Looking forward to seeing all of our old friends again soon!

431 Columbus Ave, Boston • 617-563-5723