

South Dakota Shakespeare Festival to present Macbeth for summer of 2015

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Chaya Gordon-Bland stood before a room full of USD theater supporters Friday night to both introduce Romeo and Juliet on its opening night and to announce the play title for the South Dakota Shakespeare Festival's 2015 season.

"I'm assistant professor of movement and Shakespeare here in the theater department at USD," she said. "I'm also the director and fight director of Romeo and Juliet, and there are some exciting fight sequences, as well as the artistic director of South Dakota Shakespeare Festival so I'm wearing a few different hats this evening."

Wearing the hat of director has taken a lot of work according to Gordon-Bland.

According to her, the design process of Romeo and Juliet began 15 weeks ago and the cast has been in rehearsals seven weeks.

"Tonight we are thrilled to share with you the results of an intensive and collaborative artistic process," Gordon-Bland said. "USD's production of Romeo and Juliet provides its audience with an incredible opportunity to experience one of the world's most celebrated pieces of dramatic literature as a fully produced dynamic theatrical experience."

Gordon-Bland said the cast members should be commended for their efforts in bringing the play to life, many of whom are experiencing Shakespeare for the first time.

"They've dug their heels into the work, researched and embraced the language and truly risen to the special and unique demands of performing Shakespeare," Gordon-Bland said.

"Graduate and undergraduate students have worked in many different capacities on this production including sound design, masks, props, set building, costume construction and stage management. And in doing so have been challenged to learn and grow in



USD professor and South Dakota Shakespeare Festival artistic director Chaya Gordon-Bland announced last Friday 'Macbeth' as the play title for the 2015 season.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

their craft in new ways.

"We hope you will enjoy and appreciate the students' work as our productions truly serve as learning laboratories reinforcing and supplementing the classroom learning that happens in the USD theater program."

Romeo and Juliet was designed to not only provide entertainment in the theater but to be carried home and pondered according to Gordon-Bland.

"While the production serves as a sumptuous platter of theatrical excitement, it also presses us to reflect on the deeper meaning of what has unfolded," she said. "In the closing words of the prince, 'Go home and have more talk of these sad things.' We hope you come to the theater to be entertained, delighted, engrossed and moved but that then you go home and contemplate, discuss, reflect on what the play has to say about our own contemporary values, lives and society both locally and, especially these days, globally."

"Through the downfall and plight of Shakespeare's

famous and infamous lovers, we're reminded of the devastating consequences of blind hatred and unchecked violence."

Audience members Friday and Saturday laughed and cried along with the actors as the first round of performances came to a close.

The preparation of all those involved in the production was apparent, the dialogue easy to understand and the plot thought-provoking. The characters carried the audience with them on their emotional roller-coaster as this famous tragedy came to life on the USD stage.

Gordon-Bland said this was indeed the cast and crew's goal.

"During this production we hope to share with you the power of Shakespeare's work and words as a living, breathing, pulsing theatrical entity," she said.

Gordon-Bland also announced the play title for the 2015 Shakespeare Festival.

According to Gordon-Bland, the festival will be taking an exciting turn from

their recent productions.

"After a rollicking ride of light comedies of 'As You Like It' and 'Taming of the Shrew' and upon receiving input from our audience face we're excited to take on some darker matter this summer," Gordon-Bland said. "On June 11-14 2015 in Vermillion's Prentiss Park beware and prepare to be transported to the heaths of Scotland as the South Dakota Shakespeare Festival proudly presents Shakespeare's only thriller, it's Macbeth!"

Gordon-Bland said Macbeth is meant to explore the quest for power, the dangers of vaulting ambition, fate vs. free will and the frailty of the human condition.

For more information on the South Dakota Shakespeare Festival, visit www.sdsdshakespearefestival.org.

For showtimes and ticket information for Romeo and Juliet, visit usd.edu/fine-arts/theater/current-season.cfm.

Meet Clay County's choices: Nancy Rasmussen, District 17 House Representative

By Katie Clausen
For the Plain Talk

For Nancy Rasmussen, serving South Dakotans as the District 17 representative didn't stem from a career in politics, it branched out from a career in life.

"The need was there so I answered the call for that need," Rasmussen said of becoming a state representative.

A mother, teacher, nurse, business delegate, farmer, and republican for District 17, Rasmussen is able to apply all of her life skills to the decisions made in Pierre.

Rasmussen has voted on behalf of citizens on serious issues that affect the health and welfare of South Dakotans, but her path to the state capitol has been unque.

"I grew up in Dell Rapids," Rasmussen, a South Dakota native, said.

"I started my first career in nursing," Rasmussen said. "I was a floor nurse and later helped write the book for doing some step down teaching."

Nursing was an aspect of service that Rasmussen discovered in her late teens. Later on in her health care career, she helped manage mobile cancer units.

"After I graduated from High School I spent the summer and part of that fall in Rapid City and worked as a nurses aid," Rasmussen said. "I was a float and got to see all aspects of the health care trade during the flood."

Rasmussen's primary focus is her family. She has been married to her husband, Mark, for 34 years.

Although Rasmussen grew up in the city of Dell Rapids, she raised her family on a farm, which has given her insight into the agricultural community as well.

"After I was married I was involved in farming," Rasmussen said. "So this town girl learned a lot of new interesting things about being a farmer and a farm wife. I've had lots of interesting experiences with the business."

Rasmussen is focused on the balance between agriculture and the multitude of other industries in South Dakota. District 17 consists of both Clay and Turner counties. Rasmussen and Ray Ring are both representatives for the district.

For an extended version of the story visit www.plaintalk.net



RASMUSSEN

Meet Clay County's choices: Michael Manning, County Commissioner

By Sarah Wetzel,
For the Plain Talk

The 2014 board of commissioners for Clay County are wrapping up their season of service and getting ready to pass it on to those who have been newly elected, one of whom being Michael L. Manning who will take office starting in January.

"I think it went really well," Manning said of the election. "I was glad to see the turnout in the county. There were a lot of people that voted. I feel honored that they would elect me to that position."

Manning said he hopes members of the community will take advantage of his desire for open communication so he can do his job to the best of his ability.

"If they have something that they're concerned about I hope they come and tell me about it so I can work on it for them," he said. "I'm open to if they have suggestions on how something should be done, let me know."

"It might not work out the way they want but I'm a good listener and I'm more than willing to listen to what they have to say and take it into consideration the decisions that need to be made."

There are plenty of decisions to be made in the commissioner's office.

"For what I understand they work with the budget that the county has and make decisions on roads and repairs and bridges and just overlooking things that

happen at the courthouse," Manning said. "They're there to factuate the problem and try to resolve anything that comes up and plan on how the money is spent for the county."

According to Manning, the efficient use of the county's funds will be one of his greatest priorities.

"I think (my priority) is to make sure the money that the county has is spent wisely," he said. "Also to make sure that any problems that come up are resolved and not let them fester, make sure you're on top of things and basically communicate with people."

When it comes to prioritizing issues, Manning is prepared to keep the greater good in mind.

"All issues are important but some are more important than others," he said.

"I would say the ones that are more individual like if you want a driveway in front of your place but we have a bigger issue like this whole road is breaking up."

"I think that you've got to decide to work on the road first. The road that's broken up is more important because it will affect more people."

Manning said he hopes community members share that view and those who do have individual matters will be content to wait in line behind more urgent business for the good of the county as a whole.

For an extended version of the story visit www.plaintalk.net



MANNING

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the median to go all the way from Center to Court.

The fourth option would be to remove the lights and close Center Street entirely.

"We would lose 7 total parking spots downtown by closing Center Street and making that a cul de sac," said Engquist-Schroeder. "With people complaining I always say go to the mall, you'll have to walk farther."

According to Dominguez and Uckert these options are by no means the only ones in consideration.

"People will have other ideas and we want to hear it," Uckert said. "It could be something different from these four. We came up with several options before but you don't want to present too many to the public because it gets too confusing. We tried to make it simple and then if someone sees the figures and comes up with something different we want to hear that and we'll investigate it."

Reactions from the public varied. "All four of these options are not good for downtown," said Paul Hasse who owns a building on Main St. which he rents out. "These people forgot that semis and busses use Main St. and turn. Right now the mail truck and all these food service semis go out of town past the high school."

"They don't use Cherry St anymore because they got that all messed up. The intersection's terrible, you can't turn a semi out there on Dakota and Cherry. These people are wasting taxpayer's money."

"My mindset has changed a little bit," said Engquist-Schroeder. "Initially I thought that one idea was really amazing but as I've gone through all the stuff I like a different idea. We want everybody's input. This affects our community, it's a long-term fix to this problem."

"I would pick closing Center but that's

just me," Dominguez said. "I just work downtown, I don't have a business. We avoid that intersection like the plague."

According to Dominguez, the fire chief preferred either replacing the lights or closing Center St.

"Those were his two preferred," Dominguez said. "On Cherry Street when people see the truck coming they just stop and there's nowhere for the firetruck to go so they have to drive over the median."

"Our biggest concern is that they consider businesses downtown and don't impede traffic," said Marty Nigier who owns Nygren's True Value Hardware on Court St. "My least favorite option is the full median. Customers come from Dakota Street try to turn down Court St. they won't be able to. That's my least favorite of the four."

Apparently there is a popular option not presented at the meeting which involves removing the lights and adding a stop sign on Court and a stop sign on Center which is the way the intersection originated.

"It used to be just a stop sign," said Engquist-Schroeder. "And the intersection to the East is probably a busier intersection because people are avoiding the light so there's been a lot of talk like can we just put it back to stop signs?"

This seems like the appropriate solution according to Hasse.

"Put the intersection back the way it was," he said. "Put the crosswalk back in, take out those two signs that say no turn on right and have Court and Center turn green at the same time on Main St. Then you could make both green lights if you drive just under the speed limit."

Like most of the business owners, Engquist-Schroeder said her priority is the customers.

"My main concern is pedestrian safety," she said. "I'm nervous if we take that street light out people aren't going to pay any better attention and how do you cross that street with your kid without breaking traffic up?"

"There's no simple answer, there's no

easy answer," Engquist-Schroeder said. "I don't know what the right answer is but I do know that everybody needs to be involved in especially the business owners who have downtown as their number one interest."

Along with redoing the downtown intersection, lights will also be replaced at the Main/Dakota and Main/University intersections due to the lights being out of date.

Funds for the project come from the state.

"The Department of Transportation gives the first-class cities a certain amount of money every year to make improvements on the system that is part of their jurisdiction," Uckert said. "Next year they're going to build an overlay on Main St. That's from the same pot of money."

While many are eager to see the project completed, the city urges patience.

"It's not a decision that can be made right away," Engquist-Schroeder said. "It needs a lot of time. We need everybody's ideas. We need a lot of thinking. We need to work together mainly. The city council ultimately gets to decide."

Another reason the city is in no rush is they want to make sure they are considering all options and suggestions before they arrive at a decision on what needs to be done.

"We're going to be showing the comments to the city council more than likely at the first meeting in December and then after that we'll see what they want us to do," Dominguez said. "They might just tell us to put up stop signs and do a trial and if that's the case they'll probably take another four months to come up with a solution. If we do a trial it will take 4-6 months. That's when people should expect a decision."

The completion of the project is even farther in the future.

"2016 is the plan right now but if things come up and we try different options and no one's decided, they can ask to have it delayed a year," Uckert said. "But 2016 is the plan for now."

USD students stand out at 2014 SDMTA student competition

Six student musicians from the University of South Dakota were among the top prizewinners at the annual South Dakota Music Teachers Association (SDMTA) Student Competition at Augustana College, Nov. 7-8.

Blake Proehl, a senior piano performance major from Parkston, received first place in the MTNA Young Artist Piano Competition. Proehl, a student of Dr. Susan Keith Gray, will compete at the divisional level in January at Fargo, N.D. Abigail Sandberg, a senior cello performance major from Hutchinson, Minnesota and a student of Dr. Marie-Elaine Gagnon,

placed second in the MTNA Young Artists Strings Competition. She is the alternate for the January regional competition in Fargo. Jordyn Bangasser, a senior vocal performance major from Sioux Falls, and a student of Dr. Tracelyn Gesteland, received honorable mention in the MTNA Young Artist Voice Competition.

Spencer Smith, a junior piano performance major of Hermosa, and a student of Dr. Susanne Skyrn, placed second in the SDMTA Collegiate Piano Competition. Hannah Lambertz, a senior vocal performance major from Yankton, and a student of

Gesteland, was honorable mention in the SDMTA Junior/Senior Collegiate Voice Competition. Rachael Biggerstaff, a sophomore vocal performance major from Sioux


Falls and a student of Gesteland, received honorable mention in the SDMTA Freshman/Sophomore Collegiate Voice Competition.

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