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Shakespeare would agree 'Love Stinks'

by [Cortney Maddock](#)

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RENO — With a little inspiration from a 1980s power ballad and a lot of material courtesy of William Shakespeare, director Michelle Calhoun-Fitts said the Sierra School of Performing Art's play "Love Stinks" has a little bit of comedy, a little bit of love and a little bit of drama, all in time for Valentine's Day.

"If there is someone that has something to say about love, it is Shakespeare," Calhoun-Fitts said.

"Love Stinks" combines scenes from well-known Shakespeare plays, including "A Comedy of Errors," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Taming of the Shrew" and the tragic love story of those most famous star-crossed lovers "Romeo and Juliet."

"I compiled it all," Calhoun-Fitts said. "I found all the scenes and I wrote the narration. I knew what I wanted to accomplish and came up with the scenes from there."

Calhoun-Fitts, who has worked with Nevada Shakespeare, is expanding her directing experience at the same time the Sierra School of Performing Arts (SSPA) is expanding its repertoire. The SSPA's performance of "Love Stinks" will expand its program from one performance a season to two, with "Broadway Bits" being performed in March.

"This is the first time we've ever done Shakespeare," production manager Judy Davis Rounds said. "It's a new venture for us in that we're trying to do. I don't know if you want to call it serious theater, but theater without music — dramatic theater."

Stepping outside of the company's comfort level, Davis Rounds assured people who have seen SSPA's "Broadway Bits" before that "Love Stinks" will be just as enjoyable.

"This is a comedy," Davis Rounds said. "It has some serious parts but comes back to comedy. It's a fun take on Shakespeare."

Calhoun-Fitts also said people should not break up with "Love Stinks" before they've experienced it.

"It's kind of a 'best of,'" Calhoun-Fitts said. "It's modern to some extent. There is modern music and modern acting. If someone is not used to Shakespeare, it's a great introduction."

Last year, Matt Wilkerson was introduced to acting when he was asked to play Conrad Birdie, from "Bye Bye Birdie," as part of SSPA's 2009 production of "Broadway Bits." In "Love Stinks," Wilkerson plays two characters: Benedick from "Much Ado About Nothing" and King Oberon from "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

"I was shy my first year with the acting and the singing," Wilkerson said, adding that in "Love Stinks" he acts along side his daughter Rachel, who is 10. "What made me come back is how positive it is."

Wilkerson said SSPA is a great place for people in the community who have an interest in acting to audition and hone their skills.

"I was new and didn't know anybody," Wilkerson said. "Everyone made me feel accustomed and comfortable."

As for "Love Stinks" Wilkerson said it is going to be a great play filled with comedy and drama.

"It's going to be fun, it is fun," Wilkerson said. "There are ad-libs everywhere. It's exactly what I wanted out of this show."

SSPA founding board member Davyd Pelsue said performance art companies are important to the community and community support keeps the company alive.

"Groups like this are important for the arts and music," Pelsue said, "and for our children, to give them as many performance opportunities as possible."

Pelsue said SSPA holds open auditions every year and is always amazed at the talented actors in the northern Nevada community. He said supporting local theater supports local artists.

"It's local theater, local actors, local producers, local talent," Pelsue said. "Now more than ever, it's important to support your community."

"Love Stinks" will be performed on Friday at 10 a.m. and noon for Washoe County School District students whose classes have made arrangements with SSPA to see the performance.

Public performances will be held on Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The performance will be held in the Redfield Studio Theatre in the Church Fine Arts Building at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Tickets are \$12.50 for adults and \$9 for children, students and seniors. For more information about SSPA and to purchased tickets, visit sierraschoolofperformingarts.org.

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