



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GROTTESCO CREATES A RADICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BARD

Santa Fe, N.M.—During its 25 year history Theater Grottesco has created a number of productions of national importance. *The Angels' Cradle*, was produced Off Broadway in 1999 and has been requested for the permanent archives in New York's Public Library for the Performing Arts. Since 1984, nine other productions have been seen across the country and internationally. In September Theater Grottesco celebrates its 25th anniversary with its largest show to date—a dark comedy exploring marginalization, power and class.

In *Grottesco's 12th Night*, royalty hides in their suites licking the wounds of their obsessions while their estates crumble around them and the servants dutifully pack up the houses, preparing for imminent uncertainty—leaving the only homes they have known for an unknown world with scant opportunity. Grim as their situation seems, they amuse themselves by re-enacting the love story of the Countess Olivia, Duke Orsino and Viola, the mysterious eunuch who washed ashore one day to serve the Duke. Their innocent play-making uncovers unexpected truths that have been attributed to Shakespeare for centuries, devolving into a dangerous game of its own.

The company takes aim at the tall pedestal Shakespeare is perched atop in the American Theatre, an ironic prop for an art form with a long history of irreverence. Sacrificed to the master's impressive poetry are the truly dramatic moments of the tale: the Duke falling in love with the Countess, the Countess mourning when death has just passed, and the night the ship crashes on the rocks, not to mention the suspended disbelief with mistaken identities. Grottesco combines its signature imagery, silence and "the play" of an ensemble with Shakespeare's poetry to create a play that sets a new standard for relevance in a Shakespearean comedy.



What happens to an economic state when the leaders succumb to decadence usurping their ability and interest to maintain harmony? What happens to the people when that state fails? Who are the wealthy? Can they even exist without the working class? If a fiefdom is no longer being maintained, what are the steps of decline? Shakespeare gives us the first one—there is no oil in the lamp at the lighthouse. A ship runs aground and the unraveling has begun. Is there salvation?

The humor is in the humanity and wisdom of the serving class, who witness the deterioration and attempt to bolster their crumbling leaders. They are not fooled by the cross-dressing. Some do everything they can to keep the boat afloat. Others simply wish to keep their jobs. Divisions emerge. The text from the kitchen is simpler English; their thoughts are statements of need and honesty. An interpreter is needed to understand Shakespeare's English.

Theatrical form is the foundation of Grottesco's work. Over the course of 25 years, 11 full-length and more than 30 shorter works, the ensemble has sought a different combination of classical and modern styles that best tell each story they make their own. "Clown" is an obvious starting point for *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare placed the serving class squarely in that world with its grand history through Commedia Dell'Arte, Circuses and the great vaudevillians. This is a world Grottesco knows well. However in this story the "clowns" are offstage and *not* performing. This opens the door to a darker, more reflective style similar to Samuel Beckett's characters. The play is bespeckled with dream sequences created with puppetry and breathtaking imagery inspired by Hieronymus Bosch, Domenico and Giambattista Tiepolo. Deep emotions are heightened with gestural dance, exposing the truth within a text or character too frightened to face it. The wings are onstage. Where Shakespeare's Duke pines with his head and heart, Grottesco's serving class rocks the scenery, revealing a love that is both more earthy and more ethereal.

Guided by Artistic Director John Flax, in collaboration with the Ensemble, Grottesco creates a visual and aural feast befitting a 12th Night Mediterranean celebration and 25 years of deeply moving theater. *Grottesco's 12th Night* infuses the silly with the sublime.



WHAT: Grottesco's 12th Night
WHERE: Santa Fe Opera, Stieren Hall
WHEN: September 19-October 5, 2008,
Thursday – Sunday, 8 p.m.
Tailgate parties are encouraged.
Opening Night Gala: Friday, September 19, 7 p.m. \$100.
Catered champagne reception before and after the show

TICKETS: \$25 general admission; \$10 students.
Thursday Performances: Pay What You Wish
Friday Performances: Talk-Back with the Company
Sunday Performances: Talk-Back with Guest Commentator
tickets@theatergrottesco.org 505.474.8400



Theater Grottesco, *Fortune*, 2007 .



Wenomaden, 2006.



A Dream Inside Another, Theater Grottesco and Sideshow Physical Theater, 2005.

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www.theatergrottesco.org

INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Contact:

MARSHALL PLAN

Jennifer Marshall
505-231-1776
jennifer@jmarshallplan.com
www.jmarshallplan.com