

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME IS STILL BLOOD-RED: IMPACT THEATRE PILES UP THE BODIES IN ITS RUSSIAN MAFIA *ROMEO AND JULIET*

One of the greatest tragedies of all time starts February 17, opens February 19, 2011

BERKELEY, CA, JANUARY 18, 2011—Impact Theatre continues its 2010–11 season with its production of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Impact Artistic Director Melissa Hillman. *Romeo and Juliet* opens February 19, 2011 and plays Thursdays through Saturdays at 8pm until March 27 (with previews February 17 and 18) at Impact’s home, La Val’s Subterranean in Berkeley.

After two highly successful outings with Shakespeare’s comedies *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Impact returns to tragedy with a vengeance. Most people view *Romeo and Juliet* as the consummate tragedy of forbidden love. But to Artistic Director Melissa Hillman, *Romeo and Juliet* isn’t a love story at all; it’s a bloodbath.

“This play is about the effects of violence—the violence of passionate emotions as well as physical violence,” Hillman says. “**Passion is powerfully seductive. Many, if not most, would rather be destroyed on the rocks of their passions than step away, and yet so few understand the destructive power and the catastrophic effects one’s own passion-motivated, rash decisions can have on the lives of others.**”

Impact is often praised for its ability to make Shakespeare relevant for contemporary audiences while keeping the original language intact. In this production, Hillman will set the action even more immediately and dangerously than ever: this *Romeo and Juliet* takes place in the world of the ex-pat Russian mafia, right here in the Bay Area.

“I always like to think of these plays as being somehow local,” Hillman explains. “The Russian mafia is known globally as the most ruthless organized criminals in the world, and there are factions right here. The world is dark, gritty, and apt to explode into cold, efficient, terrifying violence without warning.”

Known primarily for championing new plays and emerging playwrights, Impact (“**Best Small Theatre Company 2008**”—*East Bay Express*) has also gained a solid reputation for bold, contemporary stagings of Shakespeare’s works. Among the many critical plaudits:

- The *SF Bay Guardian* admired last season’s *Twelfth Night*, saying, “**You have to hand it to Impact Theatre: they make reimagining Shakespeare look so darned easy.**”
- The *East Bay Express* named *Midsummer* a “critic’s choice”: “**The ‘80s theme works divinely... Clever, trendy, and funny without sacrificing too much of the source material or underestimating the audience’s intelligence.**”

- The *Oakland Tribune* praised the company's *Measure for Measure*, saying, "Impact ratchets up vice, vitality...the three central performances in Hillman's production are rock-solid."
- The *San Francisco Chronicle* said of *Othello*, "Hillman gives the play the full Impact treatment... confrontational close quarters with loud music, calisthenics, a dash of nudity and splatters of blood."
- The *Oakland Tribune* called *Henry IV: The Impact Remix* "action-movie Shakespeare, and it works."
- The *Daily Californian* included *Hamlet* in its "Top Ten Plays of 2006"

This is appointment Shakespeare. Tickets for *Romeo and Juliet* start at \$10, and there are two pay-what-you-wish preview performances. **Tickets are available online at impacttheatre.com.**

For more information, please call 510 224-5744 or visit impacttheatre.com. Press photos in a variety of formats and PR archives will be available at impacttheatre.com/press.

ABOUT IMPACT THEATRE

Since 1996 Impact Theatre has spoken to a new generation of theatregoers and enthusiasts alike who want to see something fresh and bold on stage. Impact's audience ranges from students to professionals to seniors, all of whom share a taste for exciting, unpretentious theatre that doesn't conform to stale assumptions of what constitutes high culture. Impact's primary mission is to directly contribute to the future of American theatre through focusing on new plays by emerging playwrights. **Impact has produced 18 full-length world premieres, including 12 by local playwrights, as well as dozens of world-premiere ten-minute plays by burgeoning writers nationwide in the *Impact Briefs* series.** Impact also prides itself on its fast-paced, vital, contemporary spins on classic drama. Impact shows compel, provoke, and inspire, at prices everyone can afford. And nowhere else in the Bay Area can you eat pizza and drink beer while you're watching a play. **The *East Bay Express* named Impact "Best Small Theatre Company" in its 2008 Best of the East Bay issue and always includes Impact shows in its year-end top-ten lists.**

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

- PRODUCTION:** Impact Theatre presents *Romeo and Juliet*
by William Shakespeare · directed by Melissa Hillman
- WHEN:** Previews February 17 and 18 · Opens February 19 · Closes March 27
Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays at 8pm
- WHERE:** La Val's Subterranean, 1834 Euclid Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709
- ADMISSION:** \$10-20
- MORE INFO:** impacttheatre.com · press photos and PR archives at impacttheatre.com/press
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