

Black Swan State Theatre Company

Interview with Kirsty Hillhouse

Black Swan: What are you most looking forward to or most excited about for *Twelfth Night*?

Kirsty: The comedy, definitely the comedy. There is such scope for extreme silliness and humour. I love the passion and the seduction attempts of Olivia - the extremes that she will go to to get her way.

You have worked in large ensemble casts for *Much Ado About Nothing* and will do it again for *Twelfth Night*; what is that experience like for you? Do you like it more or less than working with a small cast?

I really enjoy a big cast. Everyone brings a unique element to the ensemble and it never really feels complete until the full compliment of actors are on board. Shakespeare always has several 'gangs' of people and a large cast gives a wonderful opportunity to create multiple, rich and full worlds on stage. A cast feels like a family to me and I've always liked an extensive, rambunctious clan!

What is your favourite Shakespearian play?

The Tempest. I played Ariel in a new music version in 1989 and have always wanted the opportunity to revisit the play. I also really enjoy *Macbeth*. I love the psychological interplay between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in particular. Then again, *Lear* is fairly spectacular... Definitely NOT *Titus Andronicus*. What was he thinking?

What do you think it is about Shakespeare's plays that appeal to and attract so many people?

I think Shakespeare captures so many universal human dilemmas. He is incredibly astute and writes with such sharp insight into moments of passion, love, fury, deceit and existential crisis. The fact he couches it within incredibly beautiful poetry and imagery leaves the ideas lingering in the minds and memory of the audience. The emotional observation in his works is so precise and clear that it remains relevant and poignant, through the eras. He also manages to marry huge dramatic tension with brilliant comic relief. The epic and the intimate; delicate and boisterous in one. Why wouldn't you like his work?!

The *Twelfth Night* cast will consist of some familiar faces. What do you think about the Perth theatre scene, in particular the actors?

It is always a pleasure to return to this ensemble of people. Perth contains some of the most skilful and generous performers. I always feel free to explore and take great risks with this group of performers. They are such professional and inspired technicians. They support you constantly on stage. You know you can try anything and they will come for the ride with you. I feel very grateful to be able to work with people of such expertise. One of the great delights of performing for me is the constant learning and shaping of a character and performance. Working with good people is the best way to learn. And the delicate shifting and fine tuning of the company's performances is a joy to experience. Performers in Perth have a lot of access to new work as well

as the classics so have a really rich body of work to explore which keeps people vibrant in their practice. I also think we have some of the strongest Indigenous performers in the country and the amount of original Indigenous work is impressive here.

After last year's *Much Ado About Nothing* and before you start rehearsals for *Twelfth Night*, what have you been up to?

I have been performing the title role in *Grace* for deckchair theatre and the Perth International Arts Festival, having a family reunion in Sydney and toilet training my twin toddlers!