

## *Histrionic Love Woes in the Press*

The Croatian media covered the play extensively. Coverage was seen in major newspapers, including *Vecernji list*, *Vjesnik*, *Jutarnji list*, and *Novi list*. HRT Public TV channel and radio also covered the play. Prior to the performance run two press conferences took place: one earlier, in May, with the participation of Mr. Zlatko Vitez (director of Histrion Actors' Company), Mr. Zelimir Mesaric (the director), Mr. Stephen Greenblatt (one of the authors) and Mr. Marijan Oresnik (the translator). The second press conference took place in early July, a few days before the opening night, with Vitez, Mesaric and Oresnik again participating.

Media articles carried announcements of the play, providing the story summary and mentioning the major protagonists. Some used the opportunity to write about the issue of lost Shakespeare's *Cardenio*. Other dedicated more space to the Histrion Actors' Company, whose cultural activity which started 32 years ago in Zagreb, and the 23rd Zagreb Histrionic Summer Festival.

Although TV and radio did not offer in-depth analysis of the play, some critical statements were made. The day after opening night, HRT aired a report about the premiere, announcing the arrival of the Zagreb Summer Histrionic Festival 2008.

Most announcements and commentaries were positive and, no doubt, contributed to the regular full house performances. The majority of audiences seemed to enjoy the play. One or two critics did not share their opinion, recalling earlier efforts of the Histrion, in which the storyline was more coherent, the actors better and the plays more relevant. The roles of Stef (Rudy) and Doris were single out as especially good, though most articles commended the entire cast for their work.

To quote from July 14 edition of *Vjesnik*:

A character of Stef (played by Ronald Zlabur) won sympathy and cheers from the audience. A man of the people, speaking as Shakespeare himself, he stood for common sense. His short but impressive role, expressive of the Croatian reality, added a sense of actuality to the play, along with a significant dose of humor.

*Novi list* (July 29, 2008) had this to say in relation to actors:

Zelimir Mesaric, the director of *Cardenio* performed at Opatovina by the Histrion Actors' Company, brings out a significant, commendable confidence in the young actors and actresses in the roles of bride, groom, and their friends. Andjelko is played by the impulsive, nervous, and sullen Amar Bukvic. Vilim is enacted by the warm, kindly, yet comically insecure Janko Popovic Volaric. Klara is played as cool, calm, vain, and wrathful by Iva Mihalic. Marija Boric is convincing as Susana, a professional actress now careful, now opened to an adventure. On opening night some stiffness remained perhaps in the younger actors (and some older: Mirjana Majurec as Lara, notably), but with time their performance will no doubt become more relaxed and nuanced. The greatest applause was won by Jasna Palic Picukaric as a bitter and tactless Doris, as well as Ronald Zlabur as Stef, a carpenter from Zagorje, a philosopher and transvestite... The message of the play, that one should surrender to one's passion no matter what

the social (and marital) consequences may be, is non-Shakespearean, and for that matter closer to a contemporary cynicism. The two hour long performance was met with somewhat reserved yet decent applause.

The same article also concludes that:

The tissue of a successful comedy is much more complex than the pieces borrowed from earlier sources (this is why Shakespeare is a better comedic writer than others who used the same sources as he). *Cardenio* by Stephen Greenblatt and Charles Mee shows us that ... the pure accumulation of cliches does not result in the quality of an anthological piece.

An extensive interview with Mr. Greenblatt published in the July 27 edition of *Novi list* (taken on the day of the opening night, July 12) shed additional light on the play.