Comedies dominate this summer’s Shakespeare mix

By Christopher Arnott

Companies. This year, most of them are doing the bard’s comedies. Shakespeare (Abridged) in Bridgeport. Directors will be enchanted by AMidsummer Night’s Dream in Branford, catching some comic love squabbling. While New Haven has the confounding Caesar in the mix—mind the daggers—there’s even an outdoor production of TheMerry Wives of Windsor’. TheMerryWives of Windsor’

TheMerryWives of Windsor’

the rest of the world saw them.

An exhibit of portrait photographs by Wadsworth Atheneum, some LGBTQ photographers captured realistic depictions of themselves and their friends. Others used their artwork to indulge in male-gender expectations or the history of art, skewing it to reflect new perspectives.

A queer body has never been seen in the art history canon. This is an opportunity to use these portraits for the first time, says Emily Handlin, the museum’s curatorial fellow in contemporary art, who co-curated the exhibit with Patricia Hickson. “It’s as much about gender as it is about identity, about how far right has come and hasn’t.”

The exhibit was largely drawn from the museum’s collection. Hickson says preparing for the show gave her the opportunity to discover the photographs. Hickson tested portraits from various places and eras to show the subversion of definitions of masculinities, but he has fun with it. As Ude says, “with such an inexhaustible, timeless array of men’s clothes at one’s disposal, who needs drag?”

No exhibit of gay portraiture would be complete without Robert Mapplethorpe, and he is represented by four pieces, including a portrait of an African American lover, Jack Walls, in a military uniform. As if in rebuke to Mapplethorpe, the exhibit also includes a self-portrait by Paul Mpagi Sepuya. The photos show the male African American artist sitting...
Hailu Mergia is busy performing for fans of his rediscovered 1970s and ’80s work and has a new album, “Lala Belu,” released last year, showcases Mergia’s jazz turn, though it is still funky, hypnotic and, thanks to part the accordion, “stuckaround,recording music. “I need more time for the music,” he says. “I don’t mean driving to the airport, but he does play playing in the cab, where he writes down the most of the melodies that make up “Lala Belu.”

“I work in music now, but I don’t,” he says. “Lala always changing, so it might do something else.”

Reenergized Hailu Mergia
With a new fan base, former Ethiopian jazz star creates more music

Brian Shinkovits discovered Mergia’s 1985 album on cassette in 2013 and released it on his Awesome Tapes From Africa label in 2014.

—There was no organ— Mergia says. “When the organ came in the mid-’70s, the accordion became a forgotten instrument— it was lost. After so many years”

—The ancient Syrian queen who waged war against the Romans was Harriet Goodhue Hosmer.

—The 1991 self-portrait by George Dureau. Dureau, on a book of photographs like Mapplethorpe, was a Warhol in men’s clothes but of-mutton sleeves.

—Morimura recreated Dante’s “Inferno” (Morning) and “Eight O’Clock” (Evening) and with women.

—Hedonism doesn’t reclaim art history but instead borrows it to tell a different story, of a non-Western queer man rather than a European woman. Morimura recreated Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s “Monna Vanna,” a portrait of a badly dressed friend, and performed it in Paris. “I play it over and over because I am a maroon of maroon-selves.”


—The exhibit “Stefan Perameneum” by David Wojnarowicz.

—The ancient Greek goddess Artemis (some say Diana) was a virgin because of her nuptial rites and the story of her own marriage to her beloved hunter, Actaeon, who turned into a stag.

—Practice “We want to show that here, where strangers turn into friends!”

—Hailu Mergia is a singer Feist invited Mergia to open for her at D.C.’s Lincoln Theatre in 2017.

—Brian Shinkovits’ Tapes From Africa label in 2014.

—“When I practice in my office—I’m a lawyer,” he says. “I have no TV. I can’t do it. I need money on (cabin fight).”

—Mergia plans to keep recording and touring, and he also learned that plans can quickly shift.

—“The more music now, but I don’t,” he says. “Lala always changing, so it might do something else.”