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DULUTH -- When "Othello" appears on the UMD stage this week, it will move in a style, manner and speed not totally familiar to students of Shakespeare.

Some script cutting and rearranging by Director Fred Meitzer has shortened the play's length from four to three hours.

The costumes of Thom Peterson, a speech major from Duluth, are in what is called the "traditional classic" style.

And the settings of Technical Director Sigurd Jensen will be non-representational.

The UMD Theater production will be presented at 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday in Old Main auditorium.

"The total running time of the play including intermissions will be just short of three hours," explains Meitzer. "The first act runs one hour with the second and third acts each 45 minutes long.

"In cutting Shakespeare I tried to take out only those parts I thought we could do without and not cause any serious damage to the character or the straight advance of the plot."

Meitzer made his two largest cuts in Act 2. He eliminated 7-8 pages of dialogue which gives an account of a great storm that threatens Othello during his battle with the Turks.

"In a succeeding scene anticipating the arrivals of Othello, Cassio and Desdemona on Cyprus, I kept just one arrival -- that of Desdemona -- and assumed the others were already on the island," said Meitzer.

(more)

"Traditional classic" merely means that the costumes will not denote any particular time or place but will be considered classical in appearance.

"Mr. Meitzer and I agreed on two things before I began work," explains Peterson. "The women's costumes would be styled around the 'empire waistline' which is very flattering and each of the men's costumes include the same basic color in both tights and knit shirts."

Peterson has designed, cut, sewn, fitted and finished 35 costumes for "Othello." He takes obvious pride in his work and is interested in the professional theater as a career.

He has served as both costume and set designer the past two summers at the Keweenaw Playhouse in Calumet, Mich., for musicals such as "West Side Story," "Music Man," and "Merry Widow."

No sets as popularly imagined will be used. Jensen has clothed the stage in basic black, arranged in a system of levels with minimum props and scenery to suggest location or to enhance the mood of a scene.

Terry Markovich, Calumet, will appear as Othello with Bonnie Paun, Gilbert, as Desdemona, Steve Friedman, Duluth, as Iago, Will Goddard, Duluth, as Cassio and Liz Welo, Duluth, as Emilia.