



Interview with Carie Kawa

Young REP alumni Carie Kawa returns to Walnut Creek to act in the production of Center REP's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The bi-coastal actor, who splits her time between New York and California, will play Hippolyta and Titania in Shakespeare's famed romantic comedy. Kawa has a long history with Center REP. As a teenager, she landed her very first paid acting job with the company. With this opening, we welcome a very talented actor home in a special reunion of otherworldly delights...

Where did you grow up?

I went to elementary and junior high in Walnut Creek and high school in Oakland. But if you ask an actor about "growing up" you're unlikely to get a straight answer since one of the perks of our job is that no one expects us to behave like adults.

How did you get involved with Center REP?

When I was in high school I spent two summers in the Young Rep program. Center REP was the first company ever to pay me to act. I was about fifteen or sixteen and I was cast in *The Crucible*. I think I got 75 bucks. It was all very exciting.

How would you describe your characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

Hippolyta is this Amazon warrior, very physically strong and independent, but struggling with new feelings of vulnerability as she prepares to marry a man who defeated her in battle. She's quite contained, emotionally and physically, and very conscious that she has a public role to play that might be at odds with her personal interests.

Titania is the other character, and she's the Queen of this Other World that lives in the shadows of the real world. In a way, Titania could be seen as a manifestation of Hippolyta's inner life, and as such she's very uninhibited, wildly expressive and passionate, contentious, impulsive and whimsical. She's quite uncompromising, poised and tough at the beginning, but then she gets to have this amazing transformative experience that reconnects her to her own softness, goofiness and sweetness.

All in all, they're both very sexy, smart and well dressed, which is always a pleasant way to pretend to be for an evening! I highly recommend it.

Did you always know this was what you wanted to do?

I never thought that this was what I was going to do with my life! It's completely insane what I do. I guess I've just gradually gotten addicted to all the delight and creativity of an actor's life. There's nothing like it that I've experienced.

What sets this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* apart from others out there?

Midsummer is such a charming play. I think it's the characters. There's so much love written into the show, and so many different kinds of kindness and devotion. And it's infectious. Our cast has really absorbed those qualities and I think our performances reflect that. It's a very eclectic, very generous world, this Dream world we've created, one I am so proud to share. I hope we "infect" all our audience members and spread that sense of eclectic generosity or generous eclecticism around. We could use more of it.

What is your favorite part of being involved in this production?

First of all, I love performing in California because it brings me close to my family and old friends. Also, some of my very favorite actors live here. I'm not sure Walnut Creek knows how lucky it is to have such amazing artists here.

Also, I always love working with classical scripts, and it's very exciting to be performing this play for Center REP because the company doesn't perform a lot of Shakespeare. That means that we have the opportunity to invite a whole lot of new people to enjoy this amazing playwright, who is so theatrical and current and exciting and fresh, even hundreds of years later. We also may get to transform the points of view of some people who have seen Shakespeare elsewhere and thought they didn't like it. I'd be very proud of that.

What are you most proud of?

I'm proud that I work in a not-for-profit business. I believe that art is necessary and noble and it's important to me that my work enacts positive change.

What advice would you give to someone who wanted to pursue acting?

There is no right way to pursue acting. There are no rules whatsoever. But I would say, learn as much as you can about everything that

fascinates you, including yourself! Our business is humanity! One of my dear teachers says that acting is not about being realistic, it's about being fascinating. And there are so many ways to fascinate, to grab an audience and hold on to them until you've transformed them into a different group of people than they were when they walked in. I think a great actor needs to be a very keen observer, a detective of human behavior, with great physical control and adaptability, immense confidence and a rich imagination. Compassion and patience help a lot too, and make you someone that other people want to hire. And when you've got to find a new job every two to four months, that's very practical advice.