BU Theater to stage ‘As You Like It’

Portraying the lovers in ‘As You Like It’ at Baylor are (from left) Cathy White, Scott Thompson, Lisa Hassler, Matt Lagan, Christi Moore and David Merbeth

Attention, all lovers! According to Patricia Cook, Baylor University associate professor of theater arts, anyone who is in love or has ever been in love will find plenty of audience appeal in the Baylor Theater production of William Shakespeare’s “As You Like It.”

The play will be presented Wednesday through Friday at 7:30 p.m. in Theater B of the Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center on campus.

Ms. Cook, who is directing the play, said a primary reason for the popularity of “As You Like It” in Shakespearean dramatic repertoire is that audience members identify with the emotions expressed by the lovers in the play.

“Young love is both joyous and ridiculous, silly and serious,” she said. “For instance, an intellectual man falls for an uneducated peasant woman, while an aggressive woman who wants an assertive lover is wooed by a gentle shepherd.”

Ms. Cook said that the theme of contrasting opposites provided the basis for the production’s set design. “Bill Sherry, our set designer, has created sets for the court scenes which are very rigid and squared, while the forest scenes will have a soft, feathery effect,” she said.

Ms. Cook said it is unusual for the Baylor Theater to present a Shakespearean play during the summer months, but said she had several reasons for choosing “As You Like It” for this summer’s presentation.

“We had an unusually large group of theater arts students on campus this summer, so I thought it would be better to do a play with a large cast,” she said. “Too, next season, we will be presenting ‘Hamlet,’ so this will be a good way to give the students experience doing Shakespearean drama,” she added.

Ms. Cook said she hopes that “As You Like It” will give her an idea of audience interest in “summer Shakespeare,” because she hopes to have someday an annual Shakespeare festival at Baylor during the summer months.

“It would be fun to do the productions outside so that people could bring picnic suppers and lawn chairs,” she said.

Ms. Cook, who developed a love for Shakespearean drama during her college years, said the most challenging aspect of directing Shakespeare is helping students “get past the language” to express universal emotions.

“It’s the same kind of problem that audiences face when they watch a performance of Shakespearean drama,” she said. “For instance, much of the wit in the court scenes of ‘As You Like It’ comes from Elizabethan court jokes, and we miss the humor, because the allusions are foreign to us.

“But in the forest scenes, Shakespeare’s characters portray universal emotions, and the language does not inhibit him from communicating the magic of love to the audience,” she said.

Portraying the lovers in “As You Like It” are Waco senior Lisa Hassler as Rosalind and Oklahoma City, Okla., senior Matt Lagan as Orlando; Amarillo senior Christi Moore as Celia and San Antonio sophomore David Merbeth as Oliver; Bay City senior Cyndi Mathes as Phoebe and McAllen sophomore Scott Evans as Silvius; and Miami, Fla., junior Cathy White as Audrey and Jefferson City, Mo., senior Scott Thompson as Touchstone.

Tickets for the production are $4, and may be obtained by calling 755-1861.