

THE TIMES  
**Valley Today**  
 Local • Bay Area



MARGOT ABBOTT  
 Lively Arts

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2008

Light, magic to dust  
 Livermore stage

**"THE SEAGULL"** opens Shakespeare's Associates 2008-09 season at the Bankhead on Nov. 21 for one weekend only. The comedy is by the great Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, whose particular talent is making an audience laugh and cry at the same time.

"It's about art, and what it means to be an artist; about our dreams, and truth and being in love," said artistic director **Lisa Tromovitch**, who directs the production.

I applaud their choice of Chekhov, whose plays are devilish to do but extremely satisfying for actors and their director. Layered, dense, with fascinating, complicated characters and a very accessible modern sensibility, these plays can also be dreary, depressing and sloo-ooow.

The trick is to pay attention to what Chekhov called them: comedies. Nowadays comedy means funny, but the classical meaning was a play involving a struggle — whether it was between old and young, society and individuals or was an upset of order.

"Romeo and Juliet" was labeled a comedy for that reason.

Abbott

FROM PAGE 3

This is all relevant to "The Seagull," but as a modern man, Chekhov knows we have two choices: to despair or to laugh.

Shakespeare's Associates' professional cast is from the Bay Area, which ought to make the acting community happy. The lineup includes actors familiar to the summer Shakespeare productions: **Hannah Knapp** and **Elissa Beth Stebbins**, who played Olivia and Viola this summer in "Twelfth Night," are cast as the young actress, Nina, and the lovelorn Masha.

**Michele Leavy** is the aging actress, Irina Arkadina, with **Michael Abst** as her distraught son, Treplev. Her lover, the writer Trigorin, is played by **Michael Wayne Rice**, who has also done time in the Shakespearean vineyards. **William Wolak** plays Sorin. Rounding out the cast are **Alan Kaiser**, **Nikolai**

**Lokteff** and **Eleanor Mason Reinholdt**.

"The Seagull" plays only the weekend of Nov. 21 to 23 with performances at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, a matinee at 2 p.m. on Saturday and an evening performance 7 p.m. on Sunday. Pre-curtain talks with Dr. Philip Manwell are scheduled for 7:15 on Friday and 1:15 and 7:15 on Saturday.

Tickets run from \$30 to \$45; \$20 for students. See the information above for how to purchase them. You can also go to [www.LivermoreShakes.org](http://www.LivermoreShakes.org).

Reach Margot Abbott by e-mail: [mabbott519@earthlink.net](mailto:mabbott519@earthlink.net).