

New words and music show being presented at the Shakespeare Centre as part of the Stratford Arts Festival, 30 & 31 May & 1 June. **Sample that can be used for broadcasting purposes can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6y3QvpbDj8>**

COPY:

With its famed life-size etchings of Shakespearean characters in the windows, the Stone Hall in The Shakespeare Centre could hardly be a better venue for 'Pandora's Chocolate Box; The Shakespeare Selection' presented by Histrionics as part of the Stratford Arts Festival from 30th May to 1st June.

Working to a formula that has been enjoyed elsewhere with different content, 'Pandora's Chocolate Box' mixes drama, poetry and music in an intimate setting, now bringing to life 21 of Shakespeare's characters at points sometimes during the plays but frequently after they have ended.

For example, in 'The Two Gentleman of Verona', Launce's dog Crab lands in deep trouble with his master, but Shakespeare only gave us Launce's view. Now the dog gets the right of reply. Similarly we are treated to a very fey Osric releasing his pent up outrage at the mockery he endured from Hamlet on delivering the king's challenge for Hamlet to engage in the fencing match with Laertes. After 'Othello' ends, will the gossip about Cassio and Desdemona ever be laid to rest? And how does Macduff feel ten years on? Could killing Macbeth ever be enough to assuage the guilt at having left his wife and children behind, only to be murdered?

The short character sketches are interspersed with live music for guitar, violin and voice, sometimes reflecting what has just passed on stage, sometimes preparing the mood for the next character. The music ranges from popular classical pieces to traditional folk tunes and it all adds up to a novel entertainment.

Knowledge of Shakespeare's plays is not needed as Histrionics have condensed all the necessary information to appreciate the essentials of each character piece into 60 second plot summaries. By the end of the evening audiences may find they can tell you something about plays they have never seen!

Histrionics comprises guitarist Yvonne Bloor, violinist and singer Eleanor Graff-Baker and poet/actor Christopher Whitby (who wrote the words), assisted by Elizabeth Whitby giving the rapid storylines. Some of Whitby's work has been described by award winning poet Don Paterson as "well made, inventive and witty". It's a description that Histrionics would like to think applies to the whole show.

Performances start at 7.30pm in the Stone Hall, The Shakespeare Centre, 30th and 31st May and 1st June. Tickets are available from the Festival Box office in person or by calling the Box office on 07952 819557.

ENDS (402 words)

Contact:
Christopher Whitby
50a Main Street
Peckleton
Leicestershire
LE9 7RE

07768 515401 / 01455 828434
cw@openpoetry.org.uk

Pdf leaflet with venue details:
<http://www.chriswhitby.org.uk/pandora-sh.pdf>