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Theatre on a Shoestring

PRESENTS THE VERMONT PREMIERE OF



by James Danek

Please note that this is *not* a gay-themed play.

STARRING

NATHANIEL BACON BOB CARMODY RACHEL DORFMAN KEN HORROCKS
DEAN PRATT MARY SCRIPPS KELLY WILSON

DIRECTED BY DEAN PRATT STAGE MANAGED BY HEATHER FITCH

June 5-7 • 7:30pm

South Burlington High School

Tickets: \$9 adults • \$6 children/seniors
Group rates available for 10 or more tickets

(802) 86-FLYNN or www.theatreshoe.com

Credit cards via phone/online. Cash/checks at the door only.

Do you want to see this show for free? Simply reserve a room at University Inn and Suites in South Burlington for two nights between June 4-7 and receive two complimentary tickets to the show.

Reservations can be made by going online at www.innvermont.com or calling (802) 863-5541.

Reserve now as rooms are going fast!

This show is made possible with the generous sponsorship from



Women Like That: Born a Tomboy

**francesca
susanna**

“I was born a tomboy,” Charlotte Cushman, one of the most famous actresses of the Victorian Era, said of herself. Charlotte was a tomboy to such an extent that it was virtually impossible for her biographers to gloss over the fact that she was a lesbian, as happens in many biographies of such women. She never married and was never romantically involved with a man.

Charlotte was born in 1816 and lived in a period of history where women were allowed almost no freedom and had just about every profession closed to them. She was not in the least pretty but nonetheless rose to become one of the best-loved actresses in England and America for 40 years.

She was the eldest of four children, and her father left the family. While her mother began to take in boarders to keep them afloat, Charlotte left school to train as a singer. Although her mother strongly disapproved of Charlotte's career as a stage actress, she did consider singing for a church or in recitals a respectable job.

Right from the beginning Charlotte played male roles – known as “breeches parts” – as well as strong-willed women such as Lady Macbeth and Queen Katherine (Henry VIII's first wife); she never played the ingénue or female romantic interest. She became well known for playing Romeo, a role she first played at the age of twenty and reprised again and again throughout her career, often playing the Romeo to her Juliets off stage besides.

It was not unheard of for actresses of this era to take on breeches parts despite the rigid gender roles to which men and women were expected to adhere in regular society. It could be argued that the reason for this was that the men in the audience found the novelty of seeing an actress's legs in male attire titillating, but Charlotte won the hearts of her entire audience.

Charlotte's first successes were with a company in Albany. The next season she joined the Park Theater in New York, but when the manager at the theater there refused to raise her salary to \$25 a week, she packed up her mother, brother,

sister and nephew and went to the National Theater in Philadelphia where she was the leading stock lady. Next, it was back to the Park in New York where the manager offered her \$50 a week for the 1841-42 season. She opened there as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then it was back to Philadelphia in August of 1842 where the 26-year-old Charlotte was offered the position of manager at the Walnut Street Theater, a highly unusual position for a woman.

Charlotte inspired in one young woman, Annie Brewster, an intense “love of the spirit” as Annie wrote in her diary. For a while the nature of this friendship was veiled in the accepted ideal of Victorian female friendship. But eventually Annie's brother,

She became well known for playing Romeo, a role she first played at the age of twenty and reprised again and again throughout her career, often playing Romeo to her Juliets off stage besides.

Benjamin – who was the head of the Brewster household – considered the relationship “wicked” and forbade Annie any more contact with Charlotte. “I shall never love another as I loved her,” Annie wrote.

Charlotte also hotly pursued the famous English actress Fanny Kemble. She had given up the stage to make a miserable marriage with a Southern slave owner, although slavery as an institution utterly repelled her. Charlotte showered Fanny with flowers, visits and gifts. At first Fanny responded warmly and took much comfort in the friendship, but she soon got tired of Charlotte's over-zealous attention.

Fanny did encourage Charlotte to have her portrait painted by a relative of her husband's, Thomas Sully, and in the course of sitting for him Charlotte got to know his daughter Rosalie, an artist in her own right.

In her diary Charlotte kept a detailed account of her life; the roles she played, where her money went, the letters >>