

New theater company's aim is to revisit beloved classics

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The Reduxion Theatre Company is preparing to launch its inaugural residential season next month with a production of "Romeo and Juliet." The new company's setting for Shakespeare's popular tragedy has been moved from Europe to Asia, more specifically, to an American naval base in Japan just after World War II.

"We've been careful not to call this an updated version," managing director Erin Woods said. "Shakespeare was writing in England, but 'Romeo and Juliet' takes place in Verona, Italy. He often set his plays in different time periods and places. These days, I think it's rare to see an actual Elizabethan production."

The new company's name — Reduxion — takes its inspiration from the word *redux*, meaning to revisit. The company hopes to revisit some of the most popular theatrical classics. Woods said the company's eventual aim is to become a professional theater similar to Shakespearean festivals in Alabama, Utah and Oregon.

"When we were working in New York, we kept in touch with our friends here who kept talking about the growth that was taking place in Oklahoma City," Woods said. "When we came back, we decided to start small. Our aim is to create a local Equity theater company that hires local actors but one that will also attract professional actors out of state to come work here."

Resetting "Romeo and Juliet" in post-World War II Japan allowed for unusual casting choices. The Capulets will be Japanese, and the Montagues will be American. What remains unchanged is the quarreling that occurs when these two families encounter each other.

"We thought that might be a lofty goal, but we are very excited to have four Asian actors in this production," Woods said. "For a city this size, we have a large Asian community. You just don't see many Asian actors in productions here. Oklahoma City is a beautiful texture of people, and we hope this production will bring people from these many different communities together."