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Vanier Theatre Troupe performs *The Merchant of Venice*

Montreal, March 23, 2012. **Even though it was written over 400 years ago, *The Merchant of Venice* is still relevant. And that's one of the reasons the Vanier Theatre Troupe chose to perform it, indicates Lu Yao, the Vanier Health Science student who is directing the upcoming production that will be performed on Friday, March 23 and 30 at Vanier College.**

"We wanted a play that was more than just a comedy or a love story. We wanted one with a social commentary. So we chose *The Merchant of Venice* because anti-Semitism is still a problem in our society."



Lu Yao is the driving force behind the play. When she first came to Vanier last year she knew she wanted to do theatre so she set about creating a theatre troupe. "I thought no one would be interested in joining, but we had more than 100 people sign up! Some dropped out but in the end some 50 people stayed on and are working on this play."

Auditions were held in mid September and rehearsals and preparations have been underway ever since. The play has 19 actors, a technical team of six and some 30 other supporters working on all the other aspects of the play: publicity, music, costume design and sewing, and set design and construction. "We're putting on a traditional production set in the 16th century, complete with historical costumes," explains Lu. "In all, we've had to make 25 costumes and construct three large sets. But we chose to use a modernized text that we cut down to two hours."

This is not Lu's first foray into directing. She was bitten by the theatre bug in high school when she directed *Hamlet*. "The hardest part of directing was getting all the troupe members to work as a team and keeping them focused after hours of practices," she says. Does she have any tricks? "Well I put them through acting exercises that feel like a game, and food always helps. I learned from high school that food does it all when it comes to kids!" she states with a laugh.

Lu Yao is not only proud of the production but excited as well. "It's been ten years since Vanier last put on a play and this production is the result of the effort and dedication of a lot of people. It's also a play that's rich both culturally and artistically and it has such an important message."

There will be two presentations: the first on March 23 and the second on March 30. The curtain rises at 7:00 pm, in the Vanier College Auditorium (A-103), 821 Ste-Croix Avenue, Montreal, H4L 3X9.