

Theatric Threeppeat

THOMAS OUELLETTE
actor, director and theater professor



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The name Thomas Ouellette has been synonymous with live theater since his first production as a central Massachusetts elementary student—a play he wrote and directed himself.

Today, we find the actor, director and Rollins College theater professor preparing for his summer performance with Mad Cow Theatre, reprising the role of Hysterium in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Ouellette, who has directed and performed throughout the United States in his 45-plus-year career, came to Central Florida in 1996 to serve as chair of Rollins' Theatre and Dance Department and as producing director of the Annie Russell Theatre. In 2008, he decided to scale back those responsibilities and concentrate on directing and acting. He recently directed *Pride and Prejudice* at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater, and will be directing *Romeo and Juliet* this fall.

Fresh on the heels of receiving the prestigious Cornell Distinguished Faculty Award, Ouellette jumped at the chance to once again perform in the Tony-award winning comedy *Forum*. He first played Hysterium 20 years ago in Boston, and took on the same role at the Annie Russell Theatre shortly after arriving in Central Florida.

"I couldn't pass it up," he says about his third turn as Hysterium, the head slave. "Hysterium is really fun to play. He is always trying to put the lid back on the pot before it boils."

Ouellette will be on sabbatical next year to further focus on his profession. He feels it's essential to stay current and to maintain credibility with his students. In fact, Ouellette plans to use some of the money from his award to create courses for theater majors that include trips to London, New York and Los Angeles so they can audition and network. "They need to be able to feel the pulse of the industry," he says. "They need to know how to get jobs, how to live in a big city."

While Ouellette admits he is drawn to the bright lights of the stage, teaching is his true calling. "My greatest passion is working with students," he explains. "But I am a better director and actor."

—Kevin Fritz