

noda

Society : The Beaufort Players
Production : Potted Shakespeare
Date : 22/07/23
Venue : Ascension Hall
Report by : Mike Smith

[Show Report](#)

Thank you again for the opportunity to enjoy another evening of quality theatre, the welcome as warm as ever.

An interesting choice of production, and a great way to introduce Shakespeare to those who perhaps have never had the pleasure.

Two contrasting plays, making excellent use of extended stage and front floor. Seating the audience in almost the round worked extremely well.

Colourful backdrops, set and well-chosen props, together with good lighting and appropriate music and sound effects, all adding to fire the imagination.

In Shakespeare's time all cast members were male, with the female parts being played by young men and boys. Women were not allowed to perform on the stage as it was judged an unseemly profession – until after the Restoration in the 1660's.

So, it was interesting to see that out of a cast of sixteen members, there were only three men!

These gender reversals are a reminder that much has changed since men and boys played all the women's parts, and that much more will continue to change as society grapples with questions about gender, identity and performance.

As Director, Krystyna certainly had chosen well. Each cast member being well suited to their part in both plays.

I understand that Paul Smith – the Author of Potted Shakespeare – paid a visit and was suitably impressed – and so he should have been!

OTHELLO

Nothing is more chivalrous, more romantic, than the love of Othello and Desdemona. The beautiful Italian girl is fascinated by real strength and grandeur and tender protectiveness. But neither quite knows the other.

Six members of this cast all playing two roles! No mean feat. In some cases, swapping gender. All the main characters were strong and powerful.

Mary Hill as Roderigo from the outset I found intimidating.

Julia Josephson, revelling in her role as Othello, transfixed the audience with her eye-to-eye contact and clear concise delivery.

Issy Hatwell showed both strength and weakness in her role as Desdemona, beautifully done – and the bonus of an unaccompanied song!

Kaiser Siddiqui – From a loud brash game show host in “Aiming High” to the father of the heroine and a Priest - quite a change of track! Both parts well played.

Emma O’Toole – Iago – a manipulative male villain, a lynchpin throughout! Her enjoyment of the role shone through.

Cassio – **Siel Van Grootel** – I felt real empathy for this character. Unfairly treated and a sorry end! Nicely played.

Peter Coles may not have been given many clues to his roles – but he managed admirably to find two very different characters in the Duke of Venice and Ludovico.

Scarlett O’Toole-Stevenson – Emilia, the downtrodden wife of Iago and maidservant to Desdemona. When your husband is your mother and you have divided loyalties -that’s difficult!! Well played.

Meg Lambie – Bianca, the Mistress of Cassio plays a small but important part. Fresh and very feminine.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona

The characters of the play are clearly conceived, and well contrasted. The faithful Valentine is set against the faithless Proteus; the bright and clever Silvia against the tender and ardent Julia; Speed – a notable wit and quibbler against the humorous Launce.

Meg Lambie -Transformed from a gentle Mistress to the strong boisterous character of Proteus. Great stage presence, with excellent facial expression.

Selina Patankar-Owens – Silvia, an attractive, strong, misunderstood woman. Hiding behind an image of beauty, only wanting freedom to love and freedom to express herself. This role certainly gave you the opportunity to be something else.

Julia Marques – As the “other” Gentleman of Verona, Valentine, gave a convincing performance. Excellent clear delivery and good interaction with other cast members.

Amber Thomas-Lorainey – Delightful performance, lovely facial expressions and her transformation from Julia to Sebastian was extremely well done.

Kaiser Siddiqui – Taking on yet a third role, this time as a roguish outlaw. A fun part!

Kate Martin – Lady in Waiting to Julia, again showed her talent as a character player. Well sustained accent. As a dim-witted outlaw she wielded a mean sword!

Ann Marques – This may have been a debut role, but it was played with great aplomb. Very stately persona, a very believable Duke – which Ann obviously enjoyed playing.

Sam Beamish – well if you are going to have a cameo role what better than that of a roguish outlaw! Well done Sam, I just love a bit of character acting.

Gemma Robinson – I have purposely left Launce and Crab until last. What a breath of fresh air Gemma brought to this role! From the very start engaging with the audience with her competent management of the hand puppet – which had a life of its own! The relationship between the two was a joy – bringing a high degree of comedy to the play. I sat behind two very proud parents who reminded me several times she was their daughter!!

Who knew that simplified and modernised versions of original Shakespeare plays could be so enjoyable – well done to the Author and to the Director and cast for treating us to a successful and enjoyable evening.

For me the added pleasure of presenting District Awards made a perfect end to my visit.

Best Wishes,

Mike Smith – NODA Representative London District 2.

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