

Review of *As You Like It*

advertise here



"A play of timeless conundrums"
by Avril Silk for remotegoat on 14/06/19



4



NEW MALE MODELS

NEW MALE MODELS

Listening
books
Production
Voice Reel Services



LOW COST
BANNER ADS

Rain or Shine Theatre Company brought **their own brand of magic** to the awe-inspiring setting of Glastonbury Abbey's magnificent gatehouse. **Seven talented performers conjured up a plethora of diverse characters in Jonathan Legg's witty, warm-hearted production** of 'As You Like It', a pastoral play of comedic contrasts and joyful preposterousness. **It was a stroke of inspiration** to set the play in Victorian times – on the one hand, the corrupt, restrictive buttoned-up Court; on the other, the pre-Raphaelite creative freedom of life as outlaws in the forest. I always admire Jayne Meekings' costumes, but this year she surpassed herself. Her designs highlighted the sombre rigidity of the Court (neatly underpinning the Duchess Frederique's eventual religious conversion) and the glorious freedom of living in harmony with nature. Touring companies with quick costume changes can skimp on the details that bring a costume to life, but Rain or Shine do not do this, to my delight. (I may have mentioned before that my great-grandfather was a theatrical costumier!)

The actors playing multiple roles rose well to the challenge of bringing to life their contrasting characters. Helen Fullerton demonstrated her impressive range with her austere Queen Victoria-like Duchess (with more than a whiff of Lewis Carroll's Queen of Hearts); her your-mum-at Glastonbury Festival Duchess Senior and country wench Audrey – not so green as she was cabbage looking, to use the old Yorkshire saying.

Warring brothers Orlando and Oliver (Richard Lessen and Joseph Burke) were convincing in their energetic Cain and Abel animosity, rendering their reconciliation all the more pleasing. In the forest they were, respectively, sweet, love-lorn Silvius and natural philosopher Corin the shepherd, both staying the right side of bucolic. In his turn, Anthony Young gave us a Phoebe - she of the murderous eyes - who was the right side of a pantomime dame and a sharp, sometimes Chaplin-esque Touchstone.

Rob Keeves' wrestler, Charles, and the melancholy Jacques shared a thoughtfulness that grounded both characters. As Jacques, Rob reflected on the human condition eloquently, providing a balance to the amorous mayhem burgeoning all around.

It is the amorous mayhem that endears this play to so many – that and the loving friendship between cousins Celia and Rosalind. Emmeline Braefield and Pippa Meekings surpassed themselves with their portrayals of affectionate, lifelong childhood friends on the threshold of love and adulthood. They clearly relished their roles, and that was infectious.

'As You Like It' is packed with timeless conundrums. What is the true nature of love? What divides male and female? How can we live fulfilling lives? Where do we stand on hunting? **A cast which enunciates every word clearly and enhances the play with well-chosen music** – special mention of Richard Lessen and Anthony Young - does justice to the philosophy and the fun. Speaking of fun, I liked the way exuberant foliage crept stealthily over R.R. Keeves simple set.

Rain or Shine have a long summer season ahead of them. If you missed them at Glastonbury, visit their website and catch the performance at a venue near you. **You won't be disappointed.**