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The Comedy of Errors

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Rain or Shine Theatre Company clearly believes fiercely in getting the play out to its audiences whatever the weather. And never was a group of travelling players better named. It rained, it blew and we were frozen, but the playing skills of this excellent troupe made up for the inclement weather, and although their stage was tiny they filled it with the best comedic skills I have seen in a long time, conveying the light-hearted brilliance of Shakespeare's delightful silliness with ease.

James Sheasby as Antipholus of Syracuse, brings a gentle shyness to the part, and it works perfectly in the knockabout sequences with the equally talented (and generally more boisterous) Joel Kirkpatrick as Antipholus of Ephesus. But this is a company which takes slapstick to new heights of lunacy and the audience members cheer them on from the depths of their fleecy zip-ups and golfing umbrellas - thus appreciating the body skills and eloquent use of hands and eyes in the essential double takes which rev up the daftest plot on earth, where Jane Lloyd's knowing Courtesan can comfortably usher in a touch of panto.

James Reynard, who also directs but with an eye on the clock has made a few discreet cuts, but Shakespeare's play benefits accordingly. This is rewarding theatre with fun and games from the two dotty Dromios to the hapless goldsmith, the confused wife and the stuffed parrot (don't ask me why the latter) and it is not to be missed if it comes to a meadow near you.

And to close a successful evening the company gives a bergamask, dancing and singing nautical tunes in the best tradition of early theatre (well, there is a harbour nearby), mightily raising the laughter stakes of a play, which has been known to slide into tedium.