

Society: Amateur Players of Sherborne (APS)

Venue: Sherborne Little Theatre

Production: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)

Adapted by: Martin Williams

Director: Martin Williams

Date seen: Thursday 27th June 2019

SHOW REPORT

APS continue to impress, not only with the quality of the actors, but with their ability to work cohesively as a group. Director Martin Williams' masterly adaptation of this three-hander into an ensemble piece not only exhibited the talents of his cast, but enabled them to explore the many possibilities of working together in the most flexible way.

The up-dating of the link material which introduces the Shakespearean extracts was extremely successful, including: the use of Alexa to control lighting and effects; a tablet computer; the Great Roman Bake-Off in 'Titus Andronicus', to name but a few. UV lighting for Troilus and Cressida may be a far cry from Elizabethan theatre, but it was most effective. Contemporary inferences abounded in the humorously irreverent text, and provided a refreshing take on the Shakespearean canon.

Simplicity was the key with costume: a white shirt covered with a white team tee-shirt (which unified the group), sometimes covered with something else, or easily removed for a quick change of character - it all worked extremely well and again provided a contemporary element. Props were all that they should be, and the gruesome pie almost edible.

In true Shakespearean style, cross-dressing was the norm, and despite the Director's best intentions to create a play with 'no lead roles', there were outstanding performances from the leading lady (Gary Brooks), Romeo (Sara Sadegh-Tehrani) and his cross-dressing companions (Kate Mulvey and Adrian Harding), who swaggered, swooned and simpered as required, yet provided some surprising moments of poignancy, such as Ophelia's disappointment upon hearing that she is to drown, and the death of Hamlet; they did not flinch from either battle or romance, and (strangely) Ophelia's insanity was extremely funny. Everyone in the Ensemble worked with conviction, and the links were carefully and clearly delivered (Graham Smith et al) and with an interesting professorial introduction. The audience were encouraged to be involved throughout.

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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The energy and mobility of the Ensemble was impressive, with a high degree of dexterity of voice and physique, and energy, passion and enthusiasm evident throughout: there was so much movement in such a small space, that the energy was almost tangible.

This was a highly entertaining production, and although masquerading as an irreverent, fringe-style show, it was amusingly informative and delivered by a cohesive ensemble in a polished and professional manner.

Congratulations to the Director and to all involved.

Sylvia Coates

NODA Representative

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