

British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

As You Like It

William Shakespeare
Crucible Theatre, Sheffield
(2007)

Four sets of antler horns on a bare stage, later planted with a single tree to hold the ribbons of love, set the scene in Arden. Jaques declares 'All the world's a stage' and the story unfolds. We see the Crucible at its best, every corner, every entrance, each area opening to release another manifestation, while the music comes from over our heads.

Respectably besuited courtiers round the vicious Duke in his wheel chair belie the description of Romantic Comedy, as does the vicious wrestling match between the successful Orlando over his rival Charles, ignominiously carried out to oblivion. But love begins to emerge as Rosalind offers her necklace to the victor. So begins the enchanting relationship, one of the many couplings of the play, but one that helps to infer a complex homoerotic relationship between Orlando and Rosalind, originally played by a boy dressed as a girl, and now played by a woman dressed as a man dominating the other by insisting that he calls him/her Rosalind. But they carry off this complex relationship unerringly and work their way to the climax of the multiple marriages, with serious intent.

Eve Best offers a mature Ganymede, moving the various relationships on relatively tactfully, while Christopher Brandon obviously needs the psychologist in her to help him overcome the vicissitudes of his childhood rejection. Touchstone (Harry Peacock) provides the verve and the humour, leading the singing enthusiastically, while sophisticated Jaques puts in his comments at suitable moments. The potential brides, Lisa Dillon as Celia, Olivia Darnley as Phoebe and Natalie Grady as Audrey, all indicate they have minds of their own and show little in the way of bashfulness, particularly when Audrey throws her hat at Ganymede.

Sitting as I was immediately behind Samuel West, the Director, one could see that he was thoroughly enjoying what he was seeing on stage - as was the whole audience - and he certainly had every reason to do so and be well satisfied with this excellent evening's entertainment.

This production will play at Stratford as part of the Complete Works Festival from 6th to 10th March at the Swan

Pete Wood [reviewed](#) this production on its transfer to the Swan

Reviewer: [Philip Seager](#)