

# British Theatre Guide

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

## Sweet Love Adieu

Written and directed by Ryan J-W Smith

The Dream Theatre Company at Whitby Abbey

(2003)

Ryan Smith must have a direct line to the Almighty! An outdoor performance on the North Yorkshire coast is always going to be a bit risky weatherwise, and the rain did fall - for ten minutes during the interval! Then as the play reached its climax, thunder roared and light changed to give that yellowy storm feel, but the rain stayed away.

Smith is just 29 (his birthday was earlier this month), but already he is an accomplished writer of that most difficult of forms, verse drama. *Sweet Love Adieu* is written, not just in verse, and not just in rhyming verse, but in rhyming verse in an Elizabethan style, which could so easily sink into the cringingly bathetic. He is clearly aware of this, for he makes use of it to good comic effect on a number of occasions, most memorably for me when the leading character, William, a young poet, is introduced to us as a man whose father is a cleric and whose middle name is Eric!

The play is a glorious pastiche of a Shakespearean comedy, with more than a few elements of *Romeo and Juliet* thrown in for good measure, and sports a villain who is somewhat reminiscent of Ade Edmundson or Rik Mayall. I also, I think, detected a little touch of Christopher Fry in the midst of it all. And there is certainly a strong element of farce.

The plot involves lots of falling in love, duelling, climbing (and falling off) a balcony, a phial of a drug which will make one fall into seeming death, a man dressing as a woman and a woman as a man, a friar... Does this seem familiar? Most important of all, it involves lots of laughs for the audience.

Smith has got together a very strong and talented company for this production, the first live theatre to be performed at Whitby Abbey for, I am told, around twenty years. A number are recent drama school graduates (one, indeed, graduated from Bretton Hall just two days before the performance I saw) and all are young and full of the energy needed to play these demanding comic roles in a fairly spread-out outdoor setting.

A most enjoyable and irreverent romp, which takes one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and turns it into an hilarious comedy.

*"Sweet Love Adieu" runs at Whitby Abbey until 27th July*

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)