

YORK SHAKESPEARE PROJECT NEWSLETTER



December 2008

“So here it is, Merry Christmas, everybody having fun”

Christmas with Falstaff

Now then, now then, cool cats and funksters, it's the YSP Christmas little drinkie, meeting about 6 at the White Swan on Goodramgate on Sunday 21 December, and then after that, who knows?? If you want to join us later, it might be worth getting someone's mobile number and asking them to text you if the party moves onto an even more thrilling venue! Wowsers, wowsers!

Chair's Christmas Message to the Commonwealth

From Janet Looker, stand up and pay attention...

‘And a very Happy Shakespearean Christmas to all of you. Let us hope that your Winter's Tale will make your family do a little more like A Comedy of Errors (at least they all ended up in the right place) and perhaps a little less like King Lear (though we can all give ourselves a gloomy Christmas by watching King Lear on Christmas Day, might put your family party in perspective!!).

‘After a stunning Merchant of Venice watched by a good audience overall (over 700 if I remember right), and critical acclaim we can toast Cecily Boys the director for a very welcome addition to the YSP list of productions. And considering that it was done with a quicker turn round than we usually think possible, all members of the cast and the production and back stage team must be congratulated on an excellent production.

‘But the YSP team never sleep; in January we are planning to sketch out our 09 productions, and also look ahead to what we might be tackling in 2010 and 2011. We hope that if we can do some serious forward planning we may be able to do some of the ground work in advance and feel more secure as to how we are going to take the project forward.’

The Merchant of Venice

Well now, wasn't that marvellous?? Over 700 people came to see Merchant of Venice at 41 Monkgate which was brilliant. The hard work put in by everyone was there to see in the performances and fantastic thanks and well dones to all involved.

Apart from the nice reviews, there were also lots of lovely comments left in our exercise book, some of which were;

“Fantastic show! Well done everybody!”

“Highly recommendable! Well done cast”

“Loved the lullaby at the end.”

“I came on the last night and was exceedingly impressed by the Gaoler and the casket bearer with the lead casket, which was strange as my friend had seen it previously and said he was a bit tatty” – Edna Toll (Mrs)

“Thoroughly enjoyed it, thanks!”

“Absolutely brilliant!”

“After attending the last night of Merchant of Venice I was heartbroken to discover that the handsome hunkaloid playing the gaoler was married and I wept for 27 hours” – Britney Spears, Selby

As ever, whilst it's nice that people stay with the project, it's always splendid to meet new people and we hope that those of you making your debuts with us will stay with us in some context or other, if nothing else in the fantastic social occasions we'll be having on Sunday and then late in January before the next play kicks off, which will be close enough to my birthday to justify you bringing presents, buying me drinks etc etc

The Finest Moustache In All Shakespeare

The results of the Finest Moustache In All Shakespeare competitions are in now, and, in reverse order:

4. Brian Sharp – Antonio
3. Richard Easterbrook – seasonal beard and moustache combo
2. Paul Toy – moustache, beard and monocle combo

But the winner is.....



Alex Darlington for the FANTASHTIC moustache worn in the court scene, hurrah hurrah hurrah! And what's more, you can WIN the VERY SAME FINEST MOUSTACHE IN ALL SHAKESPEARE, by simply answering the question that's set in the searing, incisive interview with Alex further down the newsletter. What excitement! If anyone has anything else they think should be given away as a prize, please be in touch!

Well done Alex, I know she'll be very proud.

A message of thanks from Cecily

Jeremy Muldowny headed up the stage management team with Rosalind Campbell and Adam Baldwin assisting (and with the help of Paul Shepherd) and I have nothing but unadulterated praise and unending thanks. They, quite simply, could not have done a better job. Brian (and all the Sharp family!) cannot be praised highly enough for his efforts towards the publicity of the show in total, and to he is owed a great debt of thanks and for his phenomenal and tireless work on publicity throughout the show. Jon Hughes brought great musical prestige to the show with his contacts at the university and his skilful direction of the musicians. All the musicians are to be congratulated and thanked for their phenomenal part in the show. Special thanks must go to Jane Collis' amazing, detailed work on the costumes in the pieces that needed to be made. Jamie Searle did an outstanding job making three fantastic desks and foot stands for the judges and added an essential part to the look of the powerful court scene. Again, extensive thanks and praise go to Jamie for his hugely skilful work and hard work on not only these but many other pieces within the production. Great thanks and praise must also go to those who so generously helped collecting and assembling pieces of set (and costume) and helped so extensively in the Get In and Get Out. Ged's brilliant help ferrying me all over the country was priceless and Brian even having to unblock the toilets on our last day in the theatre were calls above and beyond their duty and I am indebted to them. Fergus McGlynn was massively generous with both his time and expertise in lighting the production so skilfully for the whole two weeks.

Finally, last but not least, a huge thank you must go to the dedicated and talented actors, without whom the show would have not have been half so prestigious, let alone so enjoyable to work on. A massive thank you for your time, energy and commitment, but most of all for the lovely memories I have of 'The Merchant of Venice'. Well done to everybody and extensive thanks.

Five Questions for... Alex Darlington

Hello Alex, Merchant of Venice, how was it for you?

Good times. I will take away a lot of fond memories and good friends. It's a great play, and I

loved the part of Nerissa. She's a great character in that she's not too prominent so you can shape her the way you want, which I took every opportunity to do.



What did you most enjoy about the production, and why?

The thing I enjoyed the most was being able to lamp Gratiano one every night. It's not often a girl gets to hit a guy almost a foot taller than herself without any repercussions!

What did you find was the biggest challenge?

I know this is difficult to believe but in all honesty it was the flirting on stage. I'm not a natural flirt so I found it hard to get a good rapport going with Gratiano, especially without dialogue. Luckily, Dave is a very good actor, so I let him do most of the work. Lazy, but true.

If you could choose one, which would be your dream part in Shakespeare, and why?

Without even a hint of hesitation I have to say Beatrice from Much Ado About Nothing. I know most people say a character from one of the tragedies but I much prefer the comedies and Beatrice is feisty and witty. I love her relationship with Benedick too because it actually has a history; none of this 'love at first sight' nonsense, you find so often in Shakey's other plays.

You are the first winner of the annual YSP finest moustache competition, which, I imagine, must be the proudest moment of your life, and we're giving away the VERY MOUSTACHE you wore on the last night as a prize. Would you like to set a question for the nice ladies and gentlemen to try and win it?

Very proud - it's on a par with my Graduation and discovering my amazing ear-wiggling ability at the tender age of 3.

The question is:

What is the name of the boys' grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon that Shakespeare attended and I took Key Skills lessons at during my sixth form?

Instructions on how to enter to win this SUPER SOARAWAY PRIZE, keep on reading...

Five questions for Bassanio, an idler of Venice...

Hello Bassanio, so you almost cause your best friend to have his heart cut out, you give away the ring your fiancée told you was the most precious bond

between you to the next person that does you a favour and you participate in a mockery of a trial in which Shylock is humiliated and destroyed. Would you say you're a pretty decent bloke?



Yes. I think we can safely say that all's well that ends well. And it all ended well for everyone, didn't it? Didn't it..?

Do you think Antonio might be a bit of a burden in your married life, turning up offering to do you favours all the time, telling people how much he loves you and probably sending you flowers everyday? When Doctor Who had a clingy girlfriend he ended up having to make a clone of himself and dumped the pair of them in an alternative universe. In an emergency would you consider that?

To be honest, flowers and telling people he loves me are totally preferable to confusing tricks with rings and cross-dressing. At least I know where I am with Antonio - and he's pretty loaded... uhh... with niceness... too...

When you take time to make a decision and consider the options and the consequences, you choose the right casket. When you make decisions on the spur of the moment, such as giving the ring away, you make catastrophic ones. Anything you think you could learn from this?

I think that what I can learn from this is that the next time I have to make a speech about outside appearances being less important than what's inside, I can stuff the examples about law and religion, and say

'In courtship, what manipulative
Harridan, but distracting people with
A fun game of chance and logic, stops me
From noticing that beneath her charm and
Beauty, she's likely to lie to me and
Trick my little, impressionable brain
Into thinking that she'll give me all her
Money for nothing in return. Damn it.'

Nerissa and Graziano, honestly now, how long do you give them? We say a fortnight tops.



I think that he'll keep her happy as long as he keeps her ring safe and sore (or whatever it was he said). Having said that, I've heard he's always getting rings mixed up and - to be honest - not all

women like that.

Do you worry Portia's dad might have left any more strange puzzles that you have to solve before you can, er, you know, move things on in the relationship?

You have no idea. You have to complete a Su Doku to go to the toilet in that place. But now that those servants don't have to bear any caskets any more, I've set them to solving them. And luckily, I got the younger lead casket-bearer - the one who was around more often - back. I let the other one (who I only saw a couple of times) go - he just wasn't up to the job. (Overqualified, I heard) I've heard he's got a job clipping Launcelot Gobbo's toenails.

As for moving things on with Portia, I think everyone here knows that I don't want to pressure her into anything. That's why I'm helping her get a really fair prenuptial agreement written up and signed. Then if we should ever run into any difficulties in the future over lying, manipulative women, or men with questionable sexualities, we'll know exactly where we stand - on equally massive piles of Belmont money!

'Tis Pity She's a Whore

Rumbustuous well does to our good friends at Mooted for an electric production of "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," which has been touring, along with 'sold out' signs from Harrogate to Skipton to Leeds to York, where they played at Friargate. Mark France directed, with Cath Doman designing, and in it were Andy Curry, Lara Pattison, Toby Gordon and Neil Tattersall. And in the audience at Harrogate was Gareth Southgate, manager of Middlesbrough Football Club, which is all very exciting. Although they haven't won a game since. Very well lit too, I thought.

Matt Pattison's Christmas Cracker

His character's been given his own spin-off play at the Royal Court! It's called 'Waiting for Gobbo!' He thanks you all!

Coming next

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, the ides of March bring us stabbings in the Apian Way, gentlemen in togas hoping that it's not a windy day, the dogs of war, the return of the Ben "Sooth" Sawyer joke in.....Julius Caesar. Et tu, Brute? Or Richard II, but I don't really know much about that one. Talk about the noblest newsletter of them all. Yeah, that's this one.

I'm so alone

Why not buy your loved ones a membership of the York Shakespeare Project for Christmas, or a season ticket to the next 10 shows? Actually, don't answer that, but...

To enter the fantastic competition to win the Finest Moustache In All Shakespeare, to get something off your chest, or any suggestions or whether you think Matt Pattison should regularly be allowed to bung rubbish jokes in, please email me at mr.alistair@talk21.com

and anything that's fit to print will appear here, and anything too sensational will be muttered about in the back room at the Red Lion.

A merryeth yuletides, to all of thee at home!