



LADS and LOVERS, OUTLAWS and LOSERS, LAUGHS and...

I am struck by a common factor

in YSP productions: how different each one is from the others. From the construction site that became the set for *Richard III*, through the trolleys of *Taming of The Shrew*, the tiered spectacle of *Titus Andronicus* to the



The Two Gentlemen of Verona

unavoidably airy *Romeo and Juliet* we arrived at *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, showing how it can be done without any set at all.

Director Ali Borthwick made most use of the available acting space at the Friargate Theatre last November by having the cast play in the round giving them no hiding place, except for under a coat...

The spartan stage was soon forgotten as the energy and colour of the characters filled the scenes to tell this nonsensical, though quite typical, Shakespearean story of lovers, servants and, more unusually, outlaws.

Off to an intriguing start, the pace was well maintained and the cast interacted tightly- as we know a most important element of comedy is timing and they had it here in this production.

Though set in modern times, once again the language of Shakespeare seemed to fit just right (how does he do that?): Ali and the cast's work on the text had paid off to ensure that both they and the audience knew what was going on.

Many YSP productions have the cast producing some music themselves, and in the example in *Two Gentlemen* the performing participants were clearly enjoying themselves.

The Project is of course no stranger to gender-swapping of roles and here it was not confined to

those of Launce, Lucett/a and Panthino/a, but extended into the role of Crab the canine being played by a female, Lucy (to her agent), who gave an intelligent, subtly controlled debut performance.

In Ali's own words it was to be "chaotic,

mad and funny" and it certainly lived up to that- an entertaining evening of bold theatre which was appreciated by the audiences which surrounded the stage. Peter Latham of The British Theatre Guide wrote: to turn this play (which is...a "thing of naught") into an enjoyable evening's entertainment is quite an achievement - all credit Ali Borthwick and her cast and crew.



...LUCY

The Next Production

will be *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in Rowntree Park from 19th July until 30th July.

It will be directed by Mark France who is currently directing with Icabod, a company nearing the end of its tour of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, playing at the Friargate Theatre on 26th & 27th April. Mark's early enthusiasm for Shakespeare was fired when acting in open-air community productions and he has since

directed *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing* in addition to numerous works by other playwrights.

Mark will give the play a 1920s setting of glamour, with its class divisions and a hint of decadence giving over to Shakespeare's magical clash of fantasy and reality.

Mark sees the *Dream* as "an inter-relation between order & chaos...between the civilised world of the court, and the natural, spirit world". He is passionate about verse and Shakespearean language being spoken properly and intends to ensure that the cast are proficient in verse-speaking long before 'curtain up' (if there were one).

Mark will be holding a meeting for everyone involved (in whatever capacity) at 2pm on Sunday 23rd April at St Luke's Church, Burton Stone Lane. This date is of course dear to YSP members as it marks the Bard's birthday.

Last year our *Romeo and Juliet* in the park proved an exciting and demanding challenge for YSP, and this year we aim to build on that experience.

The success of *Romeo and Juliet* was not only due to the favourable weather but to our own efforts and the invaluable help-in-kind from others too: once again we shall be in need of material, costume, set materials and transport.

Help with publicity, photography, printing, distribution, internet and ideas are all welcome!

If anyone has any contacts with individuals or organisations who could assist or may be able to help themselves, please get in touch with Alan Lyons: e-mail alan@yorkshakespeare.org.uk or tel. York 638865 or Mark France: e-mail mark.france6@btinternet.com or tel. 07930 382643.

Chance of direction

We shall be staging *King John* at the Friargate Theatre, 5th to 9th December 2006. Anyone wishing to apply for the unpaid job of director should write a letter of interest to Alan Lyons.

Sad news

John White, actor, director and friend to the theatre died this month. The YSP's very first production, *Richard III*, was brought to the stage under John's direction. He was an actor and director of considerable experience having worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre Company.

John's departure will be a loss not only to his friends but to those fortunate enough to act with him or under his direction, and to every one of us who have enjoyed watching him on stage.

Annual General Meeting

will be taking place at 8.00 pm on Wednesday 17th May at The Stables, 10a Nunmill Street, York YO23 1NU, just around the corner from Robe (janitorial supplies) and Meltons restaurant on Scarcroft Road: car parking at Bishopthorpe Road car park only.

On this evening the executive committee will resign their posts and YSP members will elect another committee for the next twelve months- Members are encouraged to get involved in the running of the Project, help shape future policy and contribute to decision making by joining the committee. For more details, please contact Project Secretary, Alan Lyons; nominations and volunteers will be accepted at the meeting but advance notice would help.

Soft refreshments provided – but please bring your own ideas, opinions, enthusiasm and energy to share!

Membership

yes, our Will's birthday, April 23rd, is here again so that means that subscriptions to YSP are now due from all: please don't forget to renew your membership; your subscriptions are vital to enable the project to carry on its activities.

Yes, I would like to re-new my subscription to the **York Shakespeare Project** and enclose my cheque for £10 waged /£5 unwaged

Name:

Address: (if changed)

Postcode:

E-mail

and send it with a cheque payable to the **York Shakespeare Project**, to:
Jamie Searle, YSP membership,
20 Bootham Row, York, YO30 7BR