

York Shakespeare Project

Newsletter

March 2014

Hello and welcome to a new batch of YSP newsletters!

It's been a while... about a year and a half in fact. How are you? Well? Good. As we nervously get to know each other again, here's some stuff for you to read...

Measure for Measure

Our last production was *Measure for Measure*, directed by YSP regular Matt Simpson and performed in Friargate Theatre 5th-8th December 2013. If you didn't attend the production, here are some thoughts from the reviewers and a couple of pics courtesy of photographer John Saunders.

A clear vision and resolute comedic purpose

(Charles Hutchinson
York Press)

A wonderful occasion to see so many young people enthralled and fully engaged in this performance of a Shakespeare play

(Marguerite Jennings NODA)



Great range and thoughtful consideration of psychology and emotion

(Josh Allen One and Other)



Twelfth Night

Our current production is *Twelfth Night*, to be performed at the York Theatre Royal studio **3-12 April** and directed by Mark Smith, who last directed for us in 2009 on *Julius Caesar*.

If you're unfamiliar with the play, here's the blurry bit:

Shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria and mourning her lost twin brother, young Viola quickly becomes entangled in the courts – and courtships – of lovelorn Duke Orsino and the beautiful noblewoman Olivia. Viola is whisked into a world of music, pranks and mistaken identities. Disguising herself as a boy, she is caught in the centre of an almighty love triangle. When you're wooing the woman who loves you on behalf of the man you love, can everyone get their fairy-tale ending..?



Tickets are on sale for £12 or £10 concessions from the York Theatre Royal box office so you can pop in in person, call up or book online www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk **01904 623568**

We caught up with director Mark Smith, and Laura Soper, who plays Viola, to ask them a few questions about how things have been going in the rehearsal room and what we can expect from the production.

Mark Smith, Director.



What is it about *Twelfth Night* that you love so much?

How long do you have? On any given day, depending on your mood, you can enjoy *Twelfth Night* for its insight or its triviality, its poetry or its cheap gags, its melancholy, its sense of fun – or for just how completely lovelorn it is. It must be one of Shakespeare's most complete comedies, and hands-down one of my favourite of his plays.

The other thing that struck me about it is just how musical it is, and that's something we've really gone for

with this production. And it's got not one but three really strong female characters in some of the most prominent roles, which is really exciting!

How have rehearsals been going so far?

Honestly? An absolute joy. I was chatting to Fergus, who is the composer and musical director for the play, the other day, and hit upon the formula which sums up this rehearsal process: at the end of each rehearsal I always feel like I've got more energy than I had at the start of it, which is a really good sign. In the rehearsal room we've been playing lots of games, and the cast have really taken to the idea of keeping 'play' involved onstage – I couldn't have asked for a more creative, impulsive, odd and lovely group of people with whom to work.

Can you tell us a bit about your creative vision for the play?

It really started from the music. I can't emphasise enough how everything started to fall into place once Fergus had kindly agreed to be the composer for the show. I knew that his sense of melody and harmony, his poppy instincts and his ability to write in a range of genres would fit the multiple moods and settings of the play. So we had a lengthy meeting at which we talked about general principles as well as some specific ideas I had for music additional to those songs explicitly mentioned in the text.

I had also been thinking a lot about the setting, bearing in mind the compact, intimate space of the Theatre Royal Studio. I wanted the overall feel to be folk, theatrical and fun, with a strong sense of ensemble. Through this, I came to the idea of a simple raised platform, with all the props and set ranged at the back like bric-a-brac in a forgotten storeroom or attic. Our fantastic production team has already assembled an eclectic range of props and set dressing! We're hoping it will create a magical sense of exploring the past, digging up long-forgotten memories. We also want to keep the setting fluid and the transitions fast-paced, so it should be a fun, quick-moving show.

Is music really the food of love?

To quote Alan Partridge, 'if music be the food of love, let's eat it!'

But seriously – yes, it is. Orsino gets a bit of a rough deal sometimes, seen as a mopey chap simply in love with (the concept of) love – but surely a lot of us can empathise with the power of music to amplify our emotions. Over the years, I've fallen in love with more songs than people, that's for certain.

Laura Soper, Viola.



What attracted you to audition for Twelfth Night?

I saw the production a few years ago at York Theatre Royal and just thought 'wow, that looks like good fun'. *Twelfth Night* is silly and moving and intriguing and just a corker of a play really. The characters that Shakespeare has created are brilliant. I love the bizarre situation Viola finds herself in. Only in a play can events unfold the way they do in *Twelfth Night*! As soon as I saw that YSP were auditioning I snatched at the opportunity to experience the plays mayhem myself.

Can you tell us a bit about your character Viola?

Viola is a great character to play. She's strong and courageous, clever, loving and loyal. At the beginning of the play it seems she's lost everything but very quickly ends up with much more than she bargained for. It's a fairly bonkers scenario to be in. Part of the reason the audience loves her so much is sheer admiration that she's managing to keep up with it all - Dressing as a man, unintentionally gaining the heart of the person she was meant to woo on behalf of her employer with whom, incidentally, she is secretly in love with, herself. Not to mention having to cope with aspects of manly life she had completely forgotten about (i.e. fighting) and to cap it all, discovering that her recently deceased twin brother is not actually recently deceased at all but is right there in Illyria. At the end of the play I think she deserves a sit down! Instead she gets her man and a nice sing-song. What she never gets back is her dress. There is a sailor somewhere in Illyria enjoying a whole new lease of life...

What have you been doing in rehearsals so far?

We've been really busy learning chords on various instruments and getting to grips with the songs and harmonies which has been great fun. There's something very satisfying about learning and creating music as an ensemble. The acting side of things is getting exciting now that we've done the tricky ground work on text and character and can introduce costume, props and big wooden stage blocks to complicate things! Everyone has also been busy learning lines which, in terms of Viola, means an awful lot of learning!

Can you sum up your YSP experience so far in three words?

No, not really! Three words is not enough to do it justice. This is my first experience of working with YSP so it's been great to get to know everyone and see what they do behind the scenes. I think YSP are doing a great job in proving the importance and potential of Shakespeare's plays and it's great to be working with people who think it's as fun and worthwhile as I do.

For more regular updates on the progress of *Twelfth Night* you can:



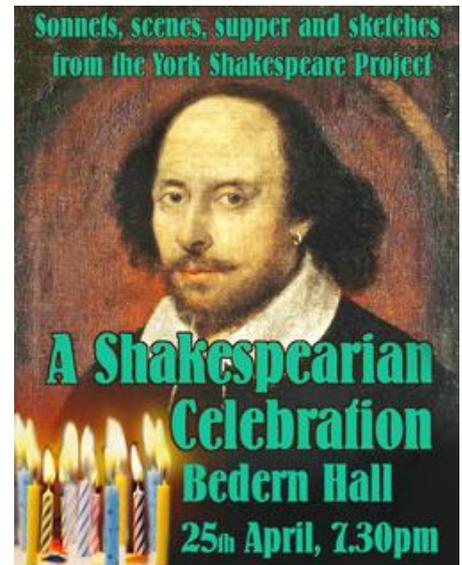
Search for York Shakespeare Project's *Twelfth Night*



Search for @Y_S_P_

A Shakespearian Celebration

On **Friday 25th April 2014** YSP are going to celebrate Shakespeare's 450th birthday at Bedern Hall whilst fundraising for our future. YSP Member Helen Wilson is planning an evening of entertainment consisting of sonnets, sketches, songs and scenes. There will be a specially created Shakespearian buffet too. More details will follow but for now you can join the event posted on the YSP Facebook page and group and email info@yorkshakespeareproject.org to get your tickets.



Le Grand Départ

We are currently working on proposals for a YSP involvement with the cultural festival attached to the Tour de France coming to York this summer. We are very excited to have been offered the possibility of being part of this unique event and will be in touch with exactly what our involvement will be!

St Crux

We need your help to run our next fundraising event at St Crux (located at the bottom of the Shambles near Whip ma Whop ma gate) on **Tuesday 27th May**. This will be a table-top sale and refreshments, setting up at 8.30am and closing and clearing up at 4 pm. The busiest time is between 11am and 3pm, and at least 6 are people needed at any one time for the catering then others to run the stalls. We had great fun last time and despite a midday downpour we made a lot of money for YSP funds. If you are free at any time during the day – even for just half an hour it would be fantastic to see you.

We also need donations of bric a brac - books, CDs, household items etc. (not clothes or shoes, dangerous dogs or items covered by The Firearms Act) and cakes, jams, sandwich fillers, biscuits etc. (homemade or shop bought). And the lovely Harold will even come and collect them from you!

To offer to help for all or part of the day or have stuff collected beforehand please contact Harold Mozley on 01904 410 619, text 077 949 333 27 or email information@yorkshakespeareproject.org.uk

New Committee

At the October 2013 AGM a new committee was voted in and thanks given to all outgoing members. The 2013-2014 committee is:

Chair – Maurice Crichton

Secretary – Harold Mozley

Treasurer – Clive Lyons

Izzy Carrick

Claire Morley

Myrna Michell

New Membership Year

Our next membership year runs from 23rd April 2014 – 23rd April 2015. Fees for 2014-2015 have been set at £15, £7.50 unwaged (including students and the over 60s) and £20 for couples at the same address. Members are entitled to vote at our AGM in October and receive free programmes at our shows and other benefits such as workshop discounts. Anyone wishing to join YSP can contact isobelcarrick@gmail.com. Current members will be contacted directly.

Please direct comments, questions, member news, articles and bad jokes for the next newsletter to clairelmorley@gmail.com

