

As You Like It a Well-Crafted Performance

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REPORTER

The lights dim and the auditorium fills with an energetic and lively romantic score that sets the tone for William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, now playing at Creighton's Lied Education Center for the Arts.

Creighton's latest production, the first to be on the main stage in the Lied Center, is an enjoyable adaptation of one of Shakespeare's lesser known romantic comedies.

The play is basically a love story between Rosalind, the daughter of the banished Duke Senior, and Orlando, the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys. Rosalind and Orlando have only met once.

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Through separate misfortunes, they are both banished to the Forest of Arden. However, when they cross paths in the forest, Rosalind is traveling disguised as a young boy and Orlando does not recognize her. He is so completely enamored with his beloved that he seeks advice from the disguised Rosalind on how to win her heart.

The story is a touching romance, but the tale is complemented by several brilliant comic performances. Some of

the most memorable characters include the servant Touchstone, (Michael J. McCandless), the forest recluse Jaques, (Bill Hutson), and the young shepherd and shepherdess, (Brad Gude and Heather A. Smith).

One thing that works to the play's advantage is that director Alan Klem chose to set the story in the southern mountains of France in 1836 rather than Shakespeare's usual Elizabethan period. According to Klem, he decided that since many of Shakespeare's plays are timeless, and the story is essentially a romance, he would set it at the height of the romantic movement - 1830's France.

Overall, the acting in *As You Like It* is terrific. Kathleen Christal, a 1986 Creighton graduate who took a break from her career in New York to return to Omaha for the production, is an excellent choice as Rosalind. She captures Rosalind's charm, grace, wit and flaring temper beautifully.

Other notable performances are made by Steph Mader, who does a superb job as the lively Celia, and David Lewis, who tackles a dual role to portray the darkness of Duke Frederick as well as the kindness of Frederick's twin brother, Duke Senior. Also, Michael J. McCandless provides excellent comic relief as Celia's servant, Touchstone. The scene when Corin, (L. James Wright) tries to teach Touchstone to fish is hilarious.

Praise should also be given to the set and costume crews. The set crew excelled in creating a beautiful forest scene, complete with an enchanting waterfall. Similarly, costume and makeup designer Wendy Stark did a wonderful job creating bright, vibrant costumes. She managed to capture the personalities of the characters through their clothing. Duke Frederick's very serious dark-colored suit mirrors his personality wonderfully, and Celia and Rosalind's purple tea dresses are a perfect choice for the characters.

However, one problem that the play has is that often the actors speak too quickly and the words seem to run together. The largest problem is in the first scene, as it moves very quickly and has a great deal of action and dialogue. Much of the story is set up in this scene, making it initially difficult to follow what is going on.

Despite the fact that the opening is a little bit confusing, once the story really begins, it becomes much clearer. The actors do a good job of conveying their characters through facial expression and gestures when the dialogue gets a little bit muddled. It is definitely worth seeing.

As You Like It will continue tonight through Sunday and Oct. 10, 11 and 12. All performances are at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for the general public and \$5 with a student ID.