

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

By William Shakespeare

The 5th Annual Charlotte Shakespeare Festival

Collaborative Arts Theatre

The Green Uptown

June 3 – 20, 2010

You've heard before that a little adversity can make you stronger. That's what has happened to the production of *The Comedy of Errors*. The weather respects no one's plans, so when you have outdoor performances the rain comes and goes as it pleases. Last night there was an early shower, but it cooled off the temperature and there was a perfect breeze on the Green. In short, it was a great night for enjoying theatre outdoors.

The Charlotte Shakespeare Festival keeps getting better and better. This production of one of Shakespeare's early silly comedies is fun. Kudos to director Joe Copley for bringing light comic touches that help make the play easily understandable, and for working so well with his actors to draw out good performances.

Shakespeare liked the idea of mistaken identity. Of course, in his day, men played women's parts. I've always imagined, being the playwright he was, he must have thought it was a stupid restriction. The basic plot is that we have two sets of twins with everyone running around thinking one set is the other. Complications ensue, as usual. But here, Mr. Copley has cast one set of brothers with women: Dromio of Syracuse played by Andrea King, and Dromio of Ephesus played by Shon Wilson. Both provide laughs with good comic timing, and a wink and nod to the fact that Ms. Wilson is African-American; and it doesn't matter a wit.

Chaz Pofahl and Adam Ewer play the other set of twins, the "masters" with both named Antipholus to make it more believable that both would answer to the same name, I suppose. Mr. Ewer is here visiting from New York City for the summer and brings considerable stage presence with him. Both actors are terrific and resemble each other enough to make it work.

The cast is good across the board: Meghan Lowther as Adriana, confused wife of one of the Antipholus', Elise Wilkinson as her equally confused sister Luciana. Peter Smeal is affecting as twins' father, Aegeon, who explains as the play opens how the separation of the twins took place. Nick Asa does well as Solinus the Duke who is sympathetic to Aegeon, and look for him in another gender-bending role. Joanna Gerdy, Ken Akers, Greta Marie Sandstra, Kirk Dickens, Corliss Hayes, and the ensemble Maddie Metz, Gabielle Pentalow, and Amanda Kendall all add to the production.

Charlotte is fortunate to have this level of Shakespeare outdoors. It may not as big as the Central Park Shakespeare in New York founded by Joseph Papp, but for our city it's just right, and we should support it. Bring lawn chairs or blankets, and food and drink. The production, and the stars, are free. **Review by Ann Marie Oliva**

Ann Marie Oliva is a local playwright and freelance writer. She is the producer/editor of ARTS à la Mode and a judge for the National Youth Theatre Awards. Ann Marie is a member of the Dramatists Guild.