

Review of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by the Ocras Theatre Group written by R.J. Westwell

Torrential rain did nothing to spoil the fine performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by the Ocras Theatre Group in the Palace Gardens Ely. Artistic Director Collette Nicholls choreographed a highly energetic and entertaining kaleidoscope of scenes that explored the voracity of feelings love can develop: jealousy, obsession, aversion, lust and hatred, to name a few.

Themes such as these were starkly explored. The 3-dimensional characters had us rocking with laughter, identifying with the despair of unrequited passion yet mocking good humouredly at the nonsensical fickleness of love's desires. We could laugh at the ridiculous nature of the human condition when driven by extremes of passion and desire while at the same time sympathising with the strength of feeling and the depth of human suffering hearts can endure.

From the over zealous acting of the mechanics to the imaginative mischief of magical intervention, few themes were left unattended.

The mayhem of unbridled passion often reigned, but always in a purposeful manner, as part of a tightly woven scheme so that we could only chuckle at the pointless vehemence of our likenesses and the playful antics of Puck and the mechanics focused us admirably on the fallibility of human endeavour.

Matt Ray played a dynamic Oberon King of the Fairies. With his potent poses and magnetic control he mesmerised us with his pivotal role in the interwoven manipulation of events with magic. He portrayed Theseus, Duke of Athens with due pomp and authority.

Oberon's attendant, Puck, played by Martin Nicholas, was a splendid self-admiring 'job's worth' rascal of the fairy kingdom. Martin's musical partnership with Sharon Cannings produced an especially appealing lullaby. Sharon sang beautifully as Titania, Queen of the Fairie and her lithe, graceful movements, her ability to convey an undercurrent of powerful evil beneath her words and her kittenish purrs in sexual play all contributed to a highly successful and credible performance. As Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, her expression of convincing disdain was most impressive.

Max Appleton as Demetrius and Tyler Mortimer as Lysander presented a particularly effective scrap between rivals for Helena's affections. Demetrius delivered his role with sturdy cold-hearted fervour Lysander with the animal magnetism of a 'real man'.

Helena's undying obsession in love was amazing. Carly Irwine was perfect for this part. Phil Cox as Bottom played his role wonderfully excessively as did Ian Delany as Flute.

Pat McCafferty, (Mrs) Quince, with her attractive accent, made her efforts to keep the unruly players in order credibly entertaining. The roles of Hermia (Josie Williamson), Egea and Starveling (Pamela Nicholls) were also essential contributors to this deliciously amusing and effective performance. For more information contact (01223) 514245