

ALL THE WORLDS A STAGE – SHAKESPEARE REVIEW

‘All the worlds a stage’ - A week of Shakespeare at Nottingham’s Theatre Royal by Kathryn Morson

On tour from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company enriched Nottingham’s Theatre Royal with back to back performances of *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It* and *the Taming of the Shrew*. These plays were performed with an impressive recycling of the same 27 actors, with each actor being in two out of three shows.

As part of their initiative to engage young adults with theatre, the RSC offered £5 tickets for those aged 16-25 for certain performances. This is perfect for students with limited budget, and thus I was able to see all three shows within the two weeks of performances. Nottingham’s Theatre Royal also offered a variation of themed events such as pre-show talks, post-show discussions and even Shakespearean bingo. *Measure for Measure*, directed by RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran, was the more serious of the three performances is in no way less engaging. We are transported to 1900s Vienna where issues of sexuality are as relevant then as today. This play highlights the double standards that men often fall prey to and women’s entrapment in societal expectations.

As You Like It, directed by Kimberley Sykes, offers a pastoral comedy that plays with audience interaction, improvisation, and often utter madness. It was humorous and fun, expressing the realities of love. Interestingly, as the audience we played the role of the Forest of Auden, with Orlando placing his love notes of audience members. This was inventive and thought provoking. In an interview with the RSC, Kimberley Sykes explains her research into the co-dependency of trees and how this was a metaphor for society. With comparison to *Measure for Measure*, Sandy Grierson (Angelo and Touchstone) and Lucy Phelps (Isabella and Rosalind) should be applauded for their presentation of such varying characters. I also took advantage of the free pre-show talk on gender and boy actors in Shakespeare’s England.

Finally, *the Taming of the Shrew*, directed by Justin Audibert, reversed gender roles to present a matriarchy, commentating that he wanted to see ‘what happens when you get female actors to play traditionally powerful male roles, and vice versa’. He discusses how different conventions give women power e.g. direct eye contact. However, the comedic aspects of this play can undermine this effort and present a matriarchy as a laughable idea.

3 great shows were performed by 27 great actors. In addition, the 27 actors were inclusive of all cultural background and it was a highlight of mine to have scenes that incorporated sign language.

Shakespeare is for all, so next time the RSC are in town, Why Nott give a show a go?

[Gender Swapping Shakespeare on Stage \(2020\)](https://www.rsc.org.uk/news/archive/gender-swapping-shakespeare-on-stage)

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/news/archive/gender-swapping-shakespeare-on-stage> [accessed 9 March 2020].

