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Hellooo,
London!

Mrs.
Doubtfire
The New Comedy Musical



FROM 12 MAY 2023
SHAFTESBURY
THEATRE

The Comedy of Errors

William Shakespeare

Rain or Shine Theatre Company

Hailes Abbey, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire



It's lively, it's funny, and it involves a lot of fish. Jonathan Legg's production of Shakespeare's roistering comedy of confusion about two sets of identical twins is a fittingly entertaining example to mark the 25th anniversary of the touring Rain or Shine Theatre Company.

There was no need for the reusable rain ponchos, helpfully advertised in the programme, as a large audience enjoyed pleasant evening sunshine in the grounds of Hailes Abbey, and two hours of literally madcap entertainment.

The merchant Aegean had identical sons, both named Antipholus, who took identical servants, both called Dromio, but each pair was separated in a storm, one settling in Ephesus, the other with him in Syracuse. Now the latter have landed in Ephesus in search of the former, but not realising their siblings are already living there.

With Rob Keeves as both Antipholus (should that be Antopholi?) and Sam Plumbe playing both their Dromios, one wondered how that final encounter between the long-lost siblings might be played. No worries: in a blink of an eye, they changed caps—red for Syracuse, yellow for Ephesus—and changed positions faster than Grant Shapps.

Keeves earned special applause for his presto patter of misadventures, with Plumbe displaying much ability as a clown while battling with his master as they slapped each other with fish—a sort of Shakespearean codswallop.

Pippa Meekings was a confident, sexy Adriana, wife of Antipholus of S, confident, with a flashing eye, flashing leg and impressive kick boxing technique, and I loved the moment when her sister Luciana, played by Nicola Rainford, reacted to the attentions of the other Antipholus with joyful, open-mouthed astonishment.

Among a capable supporting cast called upon to play several characters, Anthony Young shone in the most diverse roles, as Aegean the merchant at the start of the play, speaking with great clarity, as befitted the outdoor setting, about his sad family history, and later returning in comic roles as Doctor Pinch and memorably as Dromio's 'spherical' cook, improbably stealing Juliet's lines as she yearns for her Dromeo.

The costumes, designed and made by company co-founder Jayne Lloyd, were outstanding and greatly contributed to the characterisation of each of the roles.

Reviewer: Colin Davison

2 September 2023