

BREAKING

The Comedy of Errors at Lytham Hall

09/06/2023 - Written By Toby Stirling

The Rain or Shine Theatre Company are touring **a richly entertaining performance** of Shakespeare's most farcical play to mark 25 years of nationwide summer outdoor theatre.

An audience of 300 at Lytham Hall – the largest on the itinerary so far - were treated to **a notably-audible and beautifully-spoken show**, directed by Jonathan Legg and produced by the company's indefatigable founder Jayne Lloyd who also crafted the costumes for all 14 characters.

The experienced Anthony Young uses **a perfect pace and tone** as Aegean as he sets up Shakespeare's most complicated plot involving two sets of identical twins Antipholus and his slave Dromio, separated in a shipwreck, who are looking for their brothers.

Sam Plumbe is comical throughout as Dromio, pigeon-toed, arms wind-milling, a frantic gait and sometimes a rolling Gloucestershire accent. Rob Keeves is a hyperactive Antipholus, managing to be quick-witted and confused simultaneously, as the plot thickens. Their whirling fight with fish is **first-class**. Pippa Meekings is wonderfully lusty in every sense as Adriana, relishing her lines and forming a contrasting partnership with an effervescent Nicola Rainford who plays her less forward sister Luciana. The versatile Ceri Gifford trebles up convincingly as The Abbess, The Courtesan and merchant Balthazar – a superb example of just what touring actors have to do - whilst Adam Wright is nicely frustrated as the Duke of Solinus, the less-than-authoritative leader of the somewhat chaotic city of Ephesus.

The **physical humour is at its most ingenious and polished** after the interval, as the cast move nimbly in **knockabout ensemble scenes** and the twins change hats and characters deftly. A lovely cameo by Anthony Young, as a tipsy Doctor Pinch, is memorable.

If Melbourne can produce all four seasons in 24 hours, Lytham produced them here in a stormy 24 minutes, just two hours before the show, which flooded the theatre lawn.

Thanks, however, to the adaptability of the organising team and the sweeping brushes of the cast, all was stillness, blue sky and sunshine as **the cast drew spontaneous applause** for their **high-octane antics**.

