

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS  
Rain or Shine Theatre Company  
Hailes Abbey, Winchcombe  
Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023

If ever there was a degree course in histrionic acting, then Gloucester-based Rain or Shine Theatre Company would graduate with first class honours every time. To say this performance of Shakespeare's whackiest play was madcap would be the understatement of the year, if not their entire 26-year existence, much of which it has been my pleasure to witness around this fair county of Gloucestershire.

In the peaceful splendour of the ruins of Hailes Abbey, beneath a near-cloudless evening sky, a welcome sight after weeks of abundant rain and rather less shine, Jonathan Legg's seven versatile troupers brought this late summer lunacy amusingly to life during an evening of high jinks, zany characters and some aptly reworded quotes from *Romeo and Juliet* ("Dromio, Dromio, wherefore art thou, Dromio?") While we're there, just how many miles did Sam Plumbe (and other cast members) cover racing round the abbey's outer perimeters? By the end, he must have been in line for a medal - or a T-shirt. Or both.

The plot is decidedly complex and not a little insane. Following a shipwreck 25 years previously that scattered two sets of twins and their parents, everyone is hoping for a long-awaited reunion in Ephesus, that bastion of 16<sup>th</sup> century clean living and moral rectitude (Yeah, right), and typified by Ceri Gifford's mutation from a seductive courtesan to a prim and proper abbess. Needless to say, everything comes good in the end (it's a comedy, for goodness' sake) and, amidst much frantic hat-swapping, the hilarious dénouement was delivered with punch and panache. Indeed, did anyone consider the subtitle *Where Did You Get That Hat?*

All present and correct at the heart of this Sicilian silliness were Rain or Shine's unmistakable hallmarks: pacy productions, rapid-fire costume and character changes, expert timing and clear diction, even when it was a lengthy diatribe delivered at the speed of sound and drawing deserved applause from the engaged audience. It was all played out on another minimal set from Rob Keeves, the imposing centrepiece of which was a heavy wooden, multi-purpose door which suffered so many relentless poundings, it's a wonder it stayed intact. Faced with the kind of acting standards displayed by this entertaining company, it seems a tad unfair to single out individual performers, because they were all top-notch and worthy of the rousing ovation at the end. I have no doubt; the Bard would have been proud.

I'm already looking forward to this year's winter presentation *Agatha Appleton and the Peril of the Pyramids*, an affectionate tribute to the *Indiana Jones* canon. For further details visit [www.rainorshine.co.uk](http://www.rainorshine.co.uk)