

# Review: She Stoops to Conquer, Lytham Hall

Rain or Shine Theatre Company's open air performance of Oliver Goldsmith's 1773 comedy was English classical theatre at its best.

By Toby Stirling

Monday, 12th July 2021, 1:27 pm

Updated Monday, 12th July 2021, 1:28 pm



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Restoration comedies are wordy, but **here the talents of the seven strong cast make the audience understand every line and the voice projection ensures that every line is heard**, aided by a simple jutting out section of the stage.

The experienced Nicholas James Taylor as the unrefined but clever Tony Lumpkin, provides the contrasting link between the precious refinement of the drawing room and the rough geniality of the tap room. He looks the audience in the eye and makes them laugh.

The company know just how to use traditional doubling up employed for centuries by summer touring troupes and produce a comically rustic set of yokels at the inn to support Lumpkin as he sings lustily of Three Pigeons. The changes of pace between the scenes give the play a pleasing momentum.

Pippa Meekings in her seventeenth role for the company, this time as Kate Hardcastle who is looking for a husband, is exemplary in her clarity, always creating a stage presence.

Anthony Young and Kim Baker as Kate's parents make a comic pair - he all waving arms, excitable but also old-fashioned, she all rouged, lavishly feathered on top and wasp-waisted - ridiculously and amusingly silly.

Emily Morozow, in her first professional role, grows in confidence and volume throughout and there is fine work too from the suitors Rob Keeves and James Burke who maintain commendable zest in the longer dialogues.

The audience knows from the start of course that the mistaken identities will be ultimately revealed, and everyone will marry the correct person, so getting there is the skill. The company provided a burst of energy to counter a slight shower with half an hour to go and took us to a **first-class** finale.

**The cheers and applause at the end were a tribute to quality and committed ensemble playing in the classical style.**