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## [Breaking The Leg – “All’s Well That Ends Well” By Improbable Fictions](#)

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Tonight, I finally got back into the theatre scene of Tuscaloosa since moving back. I went to see the opening night of the theatrical troupe Improbable Fictions staged reading of the Shakespearean play “All’s Well That Ends Well.”

And all was well, as well it ended.

I’ve got to be honest: I’ve never actually been to a staged reading before. Nor have I ever actually read “All’s Well That Ends Well.”

Shakespeare can be tricky that way. As you may have guessed from what may be your perplexity about this play, it’s not one of the commonly performed plays. Theatres tend to stick with Shakespeare’s more dramatic side via “Hamlet,” “Macbeth,” “King Lear” and “Romeo & Juliet.” When they do try out a comedy, it’s either the really dramatic “comedy”/problem play “The Merchant of Venice” or the ever famous “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Six plays that theatres around the world lean on like a cane as they attempt not to stagger and fall. And why do they lean on them? Because, frankly, they’re some of Shakespeare’s most compelling, gripping stories. That have been told over and over and over again.

And that’s the Shakespearean catch. Most people think of Shakespeare as “old English.” Most people would be wrong. Shakespeare wrote in modern English. Just really OLD modern English, filled with “thee”s and “thou”s and references several hundred years beyond the common man’s understanding. But with the stories that have been told and retold in a “to death” fashion, everyone knows the story going in. They can follow the story because they’ve already followed the story.

So, while fresher Shakespeare is more welcome amongst the more theatrically based patrons, theatres and troupes tend to shy away from it for fear that it wouldn't be as popular and easily followed as the other shows.

Frankly, it won't be. But don't let that stop you. Because, if done right, people will get it and it will be good.

After all, the man wrote 38 plays. It'd be nice for people to visit the others.

So I was already happy to see the play being performed was not one of the typical Shakespearean standard bearers. And, having worked with about half of the cast in some form or another at one time or another, I knew going in that there was good talent. And I wasn't let down.

Improbable Fictions is a decently new troupe, if I'm not mistaken, run by the English grad student Nic Helms, whom I've worked with before in the other main Shakespearean troupe in Tuscaloosa, The Rude Mechanicals. This was my first Improbable Fictions show (since they do staged readings and this was my first one). Fortunately, if you missed it, there is one more night. Tomorrow night at 7:30 at the Bama Theatre. It's free to get in, but they don't turn down \$1 donations to the Bama Theatre Restoration Fund.

To review the performance... Perhaps the most standout characters were Parolles, played by Seth Panitch, and Bertram, played by Joey Gamble. Panitch artfully draws out every last ounce of comic relief from the cowardly, egotistical Parolles using very precise motion and speech. Unsurprising as he is very much a veteran of Shakespearean acting and teaches both Shakespearean acting and stage movement at the University of Alabama. Gamble, whom I have not worked with before, very adeptly plays off the somewhat douchey, player wanna-be that is Bertram, unwilling to be wed to the woman the king has betrothed him to due to her lower station.

That's not to say the other performers were not excellent in their own rights. Each had their moments of triumph. Stacy Panitch playing the smitten and spurned Helena had one of the more humorous scenes of the play early on, bantering with Parolles about virginity.

The play is well read, well acted and well worth the while. It takes about two hours out of your day, two and a half if you come in at 7 p.m. for the musical pre-show. There's not much else for me to say, because I don't feel like coming up with synonyms for "quite enjoyable" and "really good".

Go on and see it. Expand your Shakespearean universe and have a little laugh.

Tags [All's Well That Ends Well](#), [Bama Theatre](#), [Improbable Fictions](#), [Joey Gamble](#), [Nic Helms](#), [Seth Panitch](#), [Shakespeare](#), [Stacy Panitch](#), [Tuscaloosa](#)

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