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The Colorado Shakespeare Festival: The Merry Wives of Windsor is Dirty Dancing Meets Shakespeare

by Danville C. Overbo on 07/26/2014

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In a glorious throwback to the 1960s, the Colorado Shakespeare Festival presents "The Merry Wives of Windsor," set in 1962 at the Mount Windsor Hotel in the Catskills Mountain Resort — a place you might recognize from the iconic film "Dirty Dancing," also set in the 1960s. In the funniest show of the season, the merry wives in question take the audience on a romp through classic '60s music complete with dance numbers, period costumes and a brightly colored set, including a little golf cart they drive around the stage. Fans of the festival will also enjoy seeing their favorite performers from other shows in the festival, since many of them play roles in multiple productions. Between the wacky characters and "Dirty Dancing" style, "Merry Wives" is the most fun a theater fan can have at a show this summer.

Three Tales in One

Director Seth Panitch had his work cut out for him when he was tasked with telling the story of these merry wives. Shakespeare actually wove together three separate narrative arcs in this play. First, we have a push-pull romance between Anne Page (played by the talented Kyra Lindsay, back from her role as Miranda in "The Tempest") and the three suitors who wish to win her hand in marriage. Secondly, we have a hilarious duel between Pastor Hugh Evans and Doctor Caius who, portrayed as an over-the-top Frenchman by Geoffrey Kent (director of "The Tempest"), had the audience roaring with laughter the whole evening.

The tale of the merry wives weaves the entire production together for the third arc. Michael Winters, of film and television fame, plays Falstaff, a down-on-his-luck Vegas comedian who hatches a plan to make money by wooing two married women at the resort. When the husbands of the wives are warned of Falstaff's plans, Master Page (Peter Simon Hilton, also Prospero at the festival) becomes crazy with jealousy. He dresses up as a beatnik and pretends to befriend Falstaff to learn more about the affair. Meanwhile, the wives — played by gorgeous actresses Mare Trevethan and Vansessa Morosco as Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, respectively — plan to prank Falstaff for sending them both the same love letter. Funny misunderstandings and comical dives through laundry hampers ensue.

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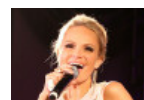
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Good Tunes

Even the ensemble and side characters play a huge role in this production. During intermission, a "dance instructor" brings audience members up on the stage to learn the rumba. The host, played by Benjamin Bonefant, has few lines but quite enthusiastic dance moves. Carefully selected, mood-appropriate music from the time period is used to transition in and out of scenes, and the audience is treated to more than one full-on dance routine during the show. The performers go the extra mile by acting out small moments depicting life at the resort as the set pieces are moved around between scenes. Two boys moving around the laundry basket at one point do a small "Who's on First?" bit.



by [Olivia Briggs](#) on 07/25/2014

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A Decade That Is a Perfect Match

When Falstaff dresses as an old woman to fool Mistress Ford's jealous husband and escape the house, he is beaten with a tennis racket. The next scene opens with "Big Girls Don't Cry." "The Merry Wives of Windsor" couldn't fit more perfectly into another decade. From the old-timey Vegas acts (Sammie Joe Kinnett as both Pistol and Nym, a ventriloquist and his dummy) to the goofy final prank on Falstaff, theatergoers will love every minute of "Dirty Dancing" fun this play has in store for them.

Playing through Aug. 9 at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is well worth a drive up to Boulder for an evening of theater under the stars.

Image courtesy of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival

TAGS: Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Merry Wives, Summer Theater, Theater

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