



Melbourne University Shakespeare Company

As You Like It

by William Shakespeare

DIRECTED BY ALEXANDER THOM
THE GUILD THEATRE 10-19 APRIL

THE CAST

Rosalind - **Dana McMillan**

Celia - **Charlotte Salusinszky**

Orlando - **Declan Mulcahy**

Touchstone - **David Harris**

Jaques - **George Fforde**

Oliver - **Nicholas Langford**

Phoebe - **Seren Oroszvary**

Silvius & Charles - **Sam Howard**

Corin - **John Rice-Whetton**

Duke Senior & Duke Frederick - **Callum McDonald**

Amiens & Lord 1 - **Stephanie Crowe**

Audrey & Lord 2 - **Laura Collins**

Adam - **Arielle Luz**

Le Beau - **Clancy Moore**

Messenger - **Kathryn White**

William - **Jevon Fulbrook**

Sir Oliver Mar-text - **Josiah Lulham**

THE CREATIVES AND CREW

Director - **Alexander Thom**

Production Manager - **Danielle Ridgway**

Stage Manager - **Natasha King**

Set Designer - **Thomas Fellowes**

Lighting Designer - **Blake Condon**

Lighting Designer / Operator - **Kelsey Watt**

Sound Designer - **Liam Bellman-Sharpe**

Costume Designer - **Isabella Vadiveloo**

Sound Operator - **Bella Mackey**

Front of House Manager - **Yane Cheung**

Publicity Manager - **Billy Exton**

Publicity Designer - **Felicia King**

Assistant Stage Manager - **Jessica Herne**

Assistant Stage Manager - **Vanessa Costanzo**

Properties Manager - **Matilda Houlihan**

THE SYNOPSIS

Duke Senior has been forced into exile by his usurping brother, the manipulative and dangerous Duke Frederick. He takes refuge in the Forest of Arden, living in the company of his cousin Amiens and the melancholy wanderer Jaques. His daughter Rosalind is held uneasily at court as a companion for her cousin Celia, Frederick's only child and heir.

Orlando de Boys, the youngest son of a renowned knight, begins to grow restless in the poverty his brother Oliver has inflicted upon him since their father's death. Orlando decides to wrestle for his fortune at Frederick's court, where he sees Rosalind and they fall in love.

The Duke banishes Rosalind, fearing that the people have begun to pity her for her father's sake. Celia, adamantly refusing to be separated from her cousin, flies the court with Rosalind to seek out Duke Senior in the depths of the Forest of Arden. To protect themselves they don disguises – Rosalind appearing as the boy Ganymede and Celia as his sister Aliena – and persuade Touchstone the court's fool to join them.

Discovering a plot by his brother to murder him, Orlando also flees to the Forest. Distributing his poorly written love poetry throughout the forest, Orlando encounters Rosalind disguised as Ganymede. She challenges him to prove the strength of his love by wooing Ganymede as if he were Rosalind.

Throughout the Forest love blooms: the shepherd boy Silvius racked by an unrequited love for Phoebe, who has in turn fallen for Ganymede, while Touchstone finds himself entangled with the goat-herd Audrey.

Oliver, stripped of his lands and titles following his brother's flight, has been sent into the Forest to hunt Orlando. The two brothers reconcile following a dangerous encounter and Oliver falls in love with Aliena.

With Orlando growing weary of wooing 'Rosalind', and with the tricky love triangle of Silvius and Phoebe unresolved, Ganymede assures them all that she will bring forth the real Rosalind, so that all the lovers may be wed...

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"The truest poetry is the most feigning, and lovers are given to poetry."

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Melbourne University Shakespeare Company's production of *As You Like It*. Tradition dictates that I must attempt to record a few small thoughts or comments about the text, our production or our process in this programme despite knowing that almost nobody really wants to read the director's note. The only exceptions being in the event that a theatre-goer is either very alone or very bored. It is to those unfortunate few that I address this text. Some of the more tragic among you may even read this three or four times by the end of the night. How upsetting. Allow me to distract you. (Again?)

This production, in a sense, has been a long time coming. I am indebted to a number of actors, academics, directors, designers and friends, whom to list would be both boring and self-indulgent. As with all things in life, when one is afforded the time to reflect about how one has gotten there, the list of potential 'thanks to's can stretch back, forbiddingly, sometimes into infancy. The process, in another sense, has also been very short. The rehearsal period for Shakespeare productions on campus typically ranging from ten weeks all the way up to four months. Comparatively, we're staging *As You Like It* in the sixth week of semester. This time-frame, a challenge in and of itself, has dictated a mode of working that placed a lot of the emphasis on the actors as individuals, a return to an organic and spontaneous approach perhaps somewhat more in keeping with traditional practices. The result has been, I think quite rightly, a return to the words.

Of course, one cannot begin to talk about *As You Like It* as a text without talking about Rosalind. She represents something like the pinnacle of Shakespeare's work in the comic mode. A female character of incredible complexity, wit, and warmth. One whose essence, whose words and manner of speaking, saturate the entire play. To disentangle *As You Like It* from Rosalind would be to speak of *Henry IV* without Falstaff, or *The Merchant of Venice* without Shylock. Unthinkable. In all three of these cases, what distinguishes these characters is the vivid and unique way in

which they speak. With that in mind, as a testament to both the writing and Dana McMillan's performance, rather than saying more on this matter myself, I feel obliged to defer to Rosalind to speak to you, in her way, on her own behalf.

As vital as Rosalind is to this play, and I mean vital in the true sense of the word, Shakespeare, incredibly, matches her. The deftly drawn collection of individuals that populate the Forest of Arden is remarkable. The sum of their interactions has produced famous phrases and speeches that have since slipped into common usage and they still speak to us, to our hearts, our words and our thoughts, across centuries.

Our production features a cast of truly diverse styles and approaches. The challenge this diversity presented for me as a director has also been my greatest source of celebration. After all, what could be more appropriate for a play preoccupied by different views on who may, and how to, play the lover? Every rehearsal held surprises: some grand, some touching, many thought-provoking, and many more simply funny. I found myself constantly reconsidering my initial interpretation of the play and I have to credit my cast for uncovering so many insights that encouraged us down the path we eventually pursued.

As You Like It is a far cry from the "frothy" romantic-comedy it is often played as. In fact, it speaks directly to its own genre and satirises a number of problems inherent in it. Rather than attempting to gloss over these problems, the cast has engaged with them. As a result, they've produced some complex performances that I have had the privilege of watching them develop. As ever with Shakespeare, what initially seem to be the biggest problems in the text, looked at in the right way, can become the plays greatest strengths.

I'd like to expend only a few more words on the cast of this production. Firstly, they quite sincerely deserved a better director than they received. The wealth of talent in student theatre is truly astonishing, but the small fragment that I worked with on this production have been unique in their goodwill and generosity. I feel privileged as a director to have worked with them as actors. I am also excited as a president of a student theatre company to have them as participants. Most of all, however, I am grateful

to them as human beings for making my life both better and easier, through their cheerfulness, their sympathy and their attentiveness.

Our cast features a number of MUSC veterans, performers returning from roughly half-a-dozen different productions over the past five years. Perhaps even more importantly however, we have a number of newcomers. Some new just to the company, others to the student theatre community as a whole. It has been wonderful to induct these newcomers into our world; the little Arden that so many of us have taken refuge in over the course of our studies (and, indeed, beyond them). Regardless, a cast such as ours, consisting of both the venerable and the vulnerable, I believe, stands as a testament to MUSC's reputation as a company that doesn't seek to be bigger than its parts, a company that invests in its participants as much as itself, and as a company that values the process as much as the product.


Penultimately, I would like to thank the crew, of whom never enough may be said. They too are conjurers, and have transformed thin air (and just a little bit of money) into a wonderful frame for this production. They have designed, built, and managed. They have swept the floors, written bad poetry and torn hundreds of pieces of paper into debris. Somehow, along the way, they've managed to slip in a few jokes of their own into this production, supporting and enhancing the spirit of the show. Please applaud extra hard for them.

Last, last, lastly, thank you for supporting both this production and this company. The pleasure has, and always will be, all ours.

Alexander Thom

**Director and President of the Melbourne University
Shakespeare Company**

Melbourne University

Shakespeare Company 

AFFILIATED TO

UWSU

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
STUDENT UNION