

TWELFTH NIGHT – Love is in the Air at Parson’s Nose

Theatre review

By
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For those still swooning over the Royal Wedding, the delightful crew at Parson’s Nose is here to carry you on to more heights of romance, love and music with their current production of Shakespeare’s ***Twelfth Night***. In fact, has any other company more embodied Orsino’s famous words, “if music be the food of love, play on!”? For this is the jovial company that welcomes you literally with food, wine and song which continues at intermission and throughout the play.



It's been the vision of artistic co-founders, Lance Davis and Mary Chalon, to bring the classics to us in a way that is fun, accessible and often participatory. I always meet someone new when I attend a performance here at their beautiful, new Abbey space in Pasadena where lively conversation while eating and drinking is encouraged. It can feel as though you've stumbled upon a party and they just happen to be performing a play.

The story of twins, Viola and Sebastian, shipwrecked and washed separately ashore in Illyria, and their complicated journey of mistaken identities and unabashed loves is perfectly suited to this company's style and setting. With a minimal, sun drenched set by Jen Orsini and simple, modern dress costumes by Michael Mullen, the performances take center stage.

Jordan Knapp engages you from the get go as the young Viola and is just as appealing in her boyish newsboy cap. Knapp deftly toggles between swooning over Orsino and navigating the advances of Olivia. Orsino is played with flair by the very debonair James Calvert, doing his best to woo the elusive Olivia, played with grace and wide-eyed enthusiasm by a feisty Taylor Hawthorne.

Barry Gordon, always a delight to hear sing, plays Feste with pathos along with a twinkle in his eye. Mary Chalon plays ladyservant Maria for all the cunning and mischief she's worth as she plots with her partner in crime, Sir Toby Belch, played with a tipsy and loveable charm by Gary Lamb.



Lance Davis is hysterical as the dimwitted Sir Andrew Aguecheek. His outrage and feigned bravado is comedic perfection as he comes up against the considerable charisma of Jordan Wall's earnest Sebastian. The incomparable John Rafter Lee plays the puritanical Malvolio, a role rich in irony and relevance, with the perfect combination of arrogance and absurdity.

The cast is rounded out by a stalwart Paul Perri as the loyal Antonio and Cameron Molina as the Officer.

This production captures the expansive, audaciousness of Shakespeare's ode to love while beautifully delivering on the heartache and loss that goes with it.