

## Royal Shakespeare Company, 2000–1

(director Gregory Doran)



Rosalind and Celia (left) anxiously watch Orlando wrestle the fearsome Charles (Act 1 Scene 2).

Critics in general liked this production's staging of the opening court scenes (see above) but were not so impressed with the Arden scenes: 'The first act, with its oppressive account of domestic and political violence, works effectively, with handsome black-and-white Elizabethan costumes and a simple tapestry backdrop. Once we've moved from the shadows into sunlight, however, all hell breaks out ... The cardboard-cutout trees with bilious green leaves are not so much Arden as Amazonian rainforest' (Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, March 2000). In this Arden everyone wore Kaffe Fassett designer knitwear and sat on needlepoint scatter cushions. For the final scene the whole stage sprouted brightly coloured flowers like a technicolour cartoon film.

Alexandra Gilbreath as Rosalind also had mixed reviews: 'Her stable-laddish "Ganymede" is too busily putting on the style to feel the Mozartean pain-in-joy that must be there if the character is to move as well as entertain' (Patrick Carnegy, *Spectator*, April 2000). 'She is at her most powerful in the passage where Rosalind tells Celia that her love is as deep as the Bay of Portugal. But she is almost too powerful, as though she were acting in a tragedy. And then five minutes later she errs in the other direction by being too playful, too much given to jumping around' (John Gross, *Sunday Telegraph*, March 2000).

Some critics felt that Anthony Howell as Orlando lacked much of this character's 'impulsive sexuality' and were not too sure about the way he resorted to dirty tricks to win the wrestling match. One critic thought Nancy Carroll as Celia was 'winsome'; another felt she was 'excessively prickly'. Ian Hogg played both dukes: a benign Duke Senior and a sadistic Duke Frederick, who at one point struck Touchstone a mighty blow to the face when he cracked one of his terrible jokes.

- 1 Review the images of this production and make notes on what *you* think audiences would have enjoyed about it.
- 2 Which of the above comments and descriptions have intrigued, inspired or annoyed you most, and why?