

Royal Shakespeare Company, 2003

(director Gregory Thompson)



Celia (left) reads one of Orlando's love poems to a delighted Rosalind (Act 3 Scene 3).

This production was set in the 19th century, with Duke Frederick's sinister court set on a tilted platform covered with snow. For the Forest of Arden scenes, this set broke apart to reveal lichen-covered planks suggesting trees and undergrowth.

Critics were divided over Nina Sosanya's performance as Rosalind (pictured above right). 'Sosanya seems uncomfortable in court dress, much happier striding about in boots and breeches' (Rhoda Koenig, *Independent*, March 2003). 'She's not fathoms deep in love, more like five nautical inches under. She fails to relish the flirtation and game-playing' (Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, March 2003). Others, however, were more impressed: 'Rosalind is the most self-sufficient and resilient of Shakespearean heroines, and Sosanya catches what matters. She's a genuinely bright flame: vital, quick, attractive and clearly capable of running sassy rings round any lover, yokel, tree or sheep' (Benedict Nightingale, *The Times*, March 2003).

Naomi Frederick as Celia was sharp and funny, yet at times touchingly sad. 'She is at her very best in the scene watching Rosalind's amorous sport with Orlando. She turns pale, jealous and is tart as the cooking apples she is peeling – at the spectacle of her bosom friend consumed by love for a man' (Kate Kellaway, *Observer*, March 2003).

Martin Hutson as Orlando was pleasantly gauche and likeable but one critic felt he seemed to have no defence against Rosalind's vigorously masculine pose 'other than an embarrassed passivity, a stupidity that is simply not to be found in the role' (Patrick Carnegy, *Spectator*, March 2003). David Fielder as Jaques mournfully stalked the forest in a skull cap and clutching a Bible, 'the very model of a mystic Catholic depressive' (ibid.).

- 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?