

Royal Shakespeare Company, 2005

(director Dominic Cooke)



Critics liked the way this Orlando, Celia (centre) and Rosalind worked as a team.

This production was dominated throughout by an immense spreading fir tree (see above), which in the opening court scenes was festooned with lights as though it were Christmas Eve. Rosalind and Celia made their first entrance ‘in ball-gowns, shivering a little as they escape the party to seek a breath of frosty air outside’ (Patrick Carnegy, *Spectator*, August 2005).

Lia Williams, pictured above, was an ‘ardent, impulsive, reckless Rosalind, who even in boyish disguise gives Orlando a lingering kiss’ (Michael Billington, *Guardian*, August 2005). But she could also suddenly change mood, as when she confessed to being ‘fathom deep in love’, a line which she delivered with a ‘quiet disbelief, a solemn bewilderment more eloquent than the ecstasy we’d expected’ (Benedict Nightingale, *The Times*, August 2005).

Barnaby Kay’s Orlando was an effective foil to this Rosalind: not the usual cardboard cut-out but a ‘fearless curly-haired outsider, who overthrows not only the bad duke’s wrestler but Rosalind’s heart as well’ (Patrick Carnegy, *Spectator*, August 2005). This Orlando avoided becoming ‘a muscular dupe by suggesting that he instantly sees through Rosalind’s disguise. What follows is a kind of extended foreplay that lends weight to Barnaby Kay’s charged delivery of “I can live no longer by thinking”’ (Michael Billington, *Guardian*, August 2005).

Equally impressive was Amanda Harris as Celia, whom she played as plain, bespectacled and bookwormish but with a wickedly sharp tongue. This Celia was also smitten with love for Orlando but was too shy to compete for his attention. In the forest she was perpetually appalled at her cousin’s behaviour, staring at Rosalind as if she had gone mad.

- 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?