

Shakespeare's Globe, 1998

(director Lucy Bailey)

A clearly unimpressed Touchstone arrives in the Forest of Arden (Act 2 Scene 4).

The Globe's bare stage was given a melancholy autumnal feel for this production, with leaves falling from above and apples scattered across the floor. The actors took full advantage of the thrust stage to establish maximum audience rapport, with the wrestling match even spilling off the stage into the yard. The audience 'cheered when Orlando beat the wrestler, they hissed when Oliver plots his brother's downfall, they wolf-whistled when Rosalind and Celia fling up their skirts and – a very modern touch, this – they sighed when the stag was slain' (Robert Butler, *Independent on Sunday*, May 1998).

Anastasia Hille played Rosalind 'with an extreme form of nervy femininity ... It's a restless, attractive performance that would benefit from some moments of stillness' (ibid.). Unusually, Hille became even more feminine when disguised as Ganymede, which upset some critics. Others, however, felt that her disguise somehow released her female inhibitions: 'As a woman she seems neurotic and unhappy. Disguised as a boy, she begins to glow with happiness and sexuality, and the wooing scenes with Orlando (Paul Hilton) are charged and erotic' (Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, June 1998).

Tonia Chauvet as Celia was 'thoughtful, playful, cautious but determined' (John Peter, *Sunday Times*, June 1998) and Paul Hilton gave some depth to the rather insipid character of Orlando: 'Touchingly bemused in his dealings with Rosalind, he gains a wry, sardonic edge in his arguments with ... Jaques' (Nick Curtis, *Evening Standard*, June 1998).

David Fielder (pictured above) was particularly popular with the audience as a randy Touchstone who tore off his jester's costume the better to woo his 'fearsomely grubby' Audrey (Jeremy Kingston, *The Times*, June 1998). John McEnery played Jaques as 'a dark wit, and a true melancholic who never play-acts but who needs an audience that can understand him. The Seven Ages speech is spoken not as a set piece but as the dark reflections of someone thinking aloud' (John Peter, *Sunday Times*, June 1998).

- 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?

