

Theatre Royal Bath, 2003

(director Peter Hall)



Orlando wanders the forest pinning poems to the trees (Act 3 Scene 2).

The sets for this production were simple but atmospheric, ‘neatly contrasting the sterile, menacing world of the court, a vicious military junta, with the freedom of Arden, transformed as the play wears on from the snows of winter to the golden dappled sunlight of summer’ (Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, August 2003).

Rebecca Hall, a genuinely ‘uncommon tall’ Rosalind, was rather lolloping and awkward in her long court dress, but those same long gangly limbs gave her a ‘beguilingly androgynous’ quality as Ganymede (ibid.) Most impressive was ‘her quiet anguish at having to go through a proxy courtship with Orlando. In place of the usual romping jollity we get a seductive melancholy so that even a line like “love is merely a madness” expresses ironic awareness of her absurd plight’ (Michael Billington, *Guardian*, August 2003). Joseph Millson as Orlando, ‘in place of the usual twerpish cipher, offers us a man both visibly smitten and angered by his peasant upbringing’ (ibid.).

Rebecca Callard was a movingly sad and lonely Celia, while Michael Siberry played Touchstone with ‘a tremendous booming presence and a touch of the music hall’ (Charles Spencer, *Daily Telegraph*, August 2003). Philip Voss as Jaques was not just ‘a posturing exhibitionist in love with his own voice ... but an entrenched cynic whose surly exit comes almost as close to spoiling the play’s happy ending as Malvolio does that of *Twelfth Night*’ (Benedict Nightingale, *The Times*, August 2003).

The 80-year-old veteran comedian Eric Sykes played Adam and also Martext, whom he turned into ‘a drunken vicar, hiccuping and slamming his thumb in a Bible and giving the audience a huge belly laugh in the process’ (Robert Gore-Langton, *Express*, August 2003). Amanda Symonds was a deliciously fleshy Audrey ‘as thick as freshly churned butter’ (Patrick Marmion, *Mail on Sunday*, August 2003).

- 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?