

## Young Vic and Wyndham's Theatre, 2005

(director David Lan)



Rosalind (right) and Celia drink wine in a Parisian café (Act 1 Scene 2).

The setting for this production was 1940s France, 'a country still smarting from years of occupation and collaboration that makes sense of the family frictions that begin the play' (Ian Johns, *The Times*, June 2005). Rosalind and Celia were first seen sitting at a table in a Parisian café (see above) and later made their escape on bicycles. Jaques was a Left Bank intellectual and the Forest of Arden was like 'a University arts centre' and sported 'an upright piano, artist's easel, piles of books and a double bass' (Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, June 2005).

Husky-voiced Helen McCrory as Rosalind, disguised in a double-breasted suit, trilby and dark glasses, was regarded by some critics as 'worryingly butch', but others were more impressed. McCrory 'manages some witty, touching oscillations between mannish bravado and vulnerability' (Paul Taylor, *Independent*, June 2005). 'What McCrory magically brings out is both the pain and ecstasy of love. Her wooing of Dominic West's very good, muscular Orlando starts as a gamesome device that turns into something unbearably anguished' (Michael Billington, *Guardian*, June 2005).

Critics were also divided over the quality of film star Sienna Miller's debut stage performance (pictured above left). 'She convincingly plays Celia as a spiky It girl in the first act, then loses her way when the action moves to the forest, hanging about awkwardly in the background' (Susan Irvine, *Sunday Telegraph*, June 2005). 'She's good at showing how embarrassing and irritating it is when Rosalind starts coming on to her would-be lover' (Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, June 2005). 'Indeed [Miller is] not at all bad as Celia ... confident and clear as a bell, if a bit prone to the amateur mistake of saying every line as if it were her last' (Robert Gore-Langton, *Sunday Express*, June 2005).

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