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“Gentlemen of Verona” keeps it simple, delightful on stage

by Karin Gadilauskas
Sun Star Reporter

This weekend UAF theatre students put on Shakespeare’s play “The Two Gentlemen of Verona.” There was a pre-showing on Thursday night that was free to the public. But this being a pre-show did not mean that it was anything less than a true performance. The lighting was excellent, simple to the point of elegance. The stage design was very uncomplicated. The set consisted of a platform, and a balcony on the stage.

This play is about friendship, backstabbing, love and reconciliation. The students brought this story to life in a series of scenes that delighted the mind and caused the audience to lose all notion of the passage of time.

Two friends, Valentine and Proteus part at the beginning of the play with Valentine going off to Milan. Julia and Proteus talk of love and then exchange rings as Proteus is sent to Milan. In Milan it is discovered that Valentine has fallen in love with the Duke of Milan’s daughter Silvia. Upon seeing Silvia Proteus falls for her, forgets about Julia and backstabs Valentine so he is banished. Julia dresses as a man and heads for Milan, never expecting to find Proteus wooing another woman, albeit in the name of another man. Valentine is made king of a band of outlaws and lives in the forest. Silvia decides to flee and is captured by the outlaws

who take her to the cave Valentine is in. Proteus finds her, they argue, Valentine comes out and argues with Proteus they forgive each other and discover Julia has been posing as Proteus’ page.

As is common in Shakespearian plays, the main characters get married. Julia to Proteus and Valentine to Silvia. But why Julia would go back to Proteus after he had spent such a large amount of time attempting to woo another woman?...the wonders of William Shakespeare.

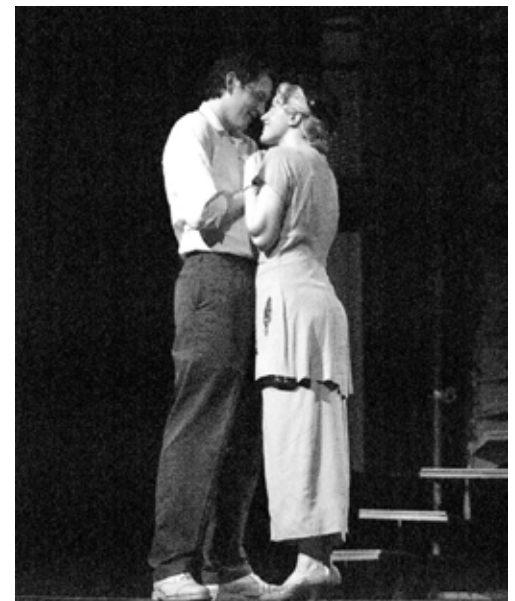
As the last curtain fell and the applause had died away people expressed amazement at the time. The general consensus was that it hadn’t felt like it had been that long.

During one scene of the play, one of the leading ladies, Julia is practicing her archery. She used a real bow and she only missed once, a true testament to her prowess as an archer. This gave the audience another reason to love the acting.

Proteus has a servant who acted as a comic relief. The man, Launce by name, trumps onstage with an enormous mastiff. His lines regarding the dog were a source of much laughter for the audience. “...I think Crab, my dog, be the sourest-natured dog that lives:” he said at one point while the mastiff just sits there and looks at him. He later stomps off for the ship Proteus is sailing for Milan in, but only at the urging of Panthino, the woman sent to fetch him.

The clothing in the play was reminiscent of a much later date than that of the time Shakespeare wrote this play but each article of clothing fit the character wearing it. Clothing ranging from brightly colored dresses to disheveled suits helped the audience keep the stations of the characters in mind.

This play is a striking comedy that gives an excellent break from the studying. The ticket price is worth it. Kudos to the cast; and as the Outlaws say in the fifth act. “A prize, a prize, a prize!”



Senior Craig Brookes and junior Anna Gagne-Hawes rehearse “The Two Gentlemen of Verona” before opening night.

Photo by Mark Campbell/Sun Star