

Fast and Furious (and Funny) Shakespeare (1)

When the bustling crowd of Year 12's walked into The Marilyn Davis Theatre, they expected to be bored out of their minds. However, they saw 'the maroon coloured curtains already drawn and three smiling actors welcoming the stream of people walking through the door, eager to get the show started. The audience did not expect to be drawn in and willing to watch the User Friendly Shakespeare Company's 'King Lear.' The show had captured the audiences' attention from the very start and had everyone crying tears of laughter thanks to the direction of Harley Browne.

Even though there were only three actors, they were everything the show needed to be a worthwhile performance. The three actors; Andrew, Jayden and Brent, played multiple characters and demanded the audience's attention from the moment they walked on stage. The mix of modern and Elizabethan English language was a relief to the teenaged audience. It felt less intimidating as the audience could actually understand what was happening; minus the 'thee's' and 'thou's' (2)

The actors, Brent, Alan and Brian, evidently gave it their all. However, some parts of the play where would shout out loud were a bit unnecessary and unpleasant to the ears. Despite the effortless humour throughout the play, the basic storyline was hard to keep up with. This was due to the obvious improvisation of the actors (3). It felt as if the play was more about the User Friendly Shakespeare Company than 'King Lear' itself. (4) However they did give it their all and it paid off with the entire audience clutching their sides from laughter (5)

The key to this hilarious performance was not the way the actors looked. The speed of light costume changes were accompanied by the simplicity of the costume designs. The quick costume changes were amusing to watch (6).

If there was one feature of the play that did not 'wow' the audience, it would have had to be the setting and props. There are stage screens right in the middle of the stage which were the set from time the audience had walked in until the very end. Admittedly so, the plain props produced much effect as they were interacted with greatly and were used efficiently. They added dramatically to the humorous act (7).

The major downfall of the performance was the pace. The pace was incredibly quick so that one scene jumps to another in a flash of lightning. If you happened to blink, the performance has thundered on and you have missed a huge chunk. I believe that anyone who has no background of the original 'King Lear' would not understand the basic plot and end up very confused. On the other hand, I also believe that someone who has a deep understanding of King Lear would also be confused as the User Friendly Shakespeare Company's 'King Lear' only covered a small part of the original play. This could somehow be excused as the performance was meant to be a full length play squashed into one hour (8).

The User Friendly Shakespeare Company's 'King Lear' was not to be missed. With three incredibly hilarious actors accompanied by speedy costume changes and the most basic set, how could one not have fun? If you are looking for a night of laughter, this would definitely be the performance for you.