

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



***The Tempest, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Richard III*, presented by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, February-November 2014.**

Geoff Ridden

Southern Oregon University

riddeng@sou.edu

The Tempest. Director: Tony Taccone. With Denis Arndt (Prospero), Kate Hurster (Miranda), and Wayne T. Carr (Caliban).

The Comedy of Errors. Director: Kent Gash. With Rodney Gardiner (Dromios), Omoze Idehenre (Adriana), Monique Robinson (Luciana), and Tobie Windham (Antipholi).

The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Director: Sarah Rasmussen. With Christiana Clark (Proteus), K. T. Vogt (Launce and Duke of Milan), Sofia Jean Gomez (Valentine), and Sara Bruner (Speed).

Richard III. Director: James Bundy. With Dan Donohue (Richard), Anthony Heald (Buckingham), Kate Hurster (Lady Anne), and Robin Goodrin Nordli (Queen Margaret).

There was a good deal of intertextuality within the 2014 Oregon Shakespeare Festival season. It included two of Shakespeare's shorter plays, one from the beginning of his career and one from the end: *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest*. Both share an observance of the unities of time, place and action, both begin with a shipwreck and each deals with the treatment of strangers in a foreign land. *Richard III* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* both include a 'false, perjur'd' character, and *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* both have characters in fear of losing their

identity. The company's love affair with *Macbeth*, which I have noted in previous years, continued this season with references to it in one of the non-Shakespearean plays: *Wrinkle in Time* (a stage adaptation by Tracy Young of the popular book by Madeleine L'Engle), which alluded to the witches, but also referred to *The Tempest* and even had three doors in its set, like *The Comedy of Errors*.

One major innovation of the 2014 open air season at the Allen Elizabethan Theatre was the introduction of microphones, and *Richard III* was the first production in which the actors' voices were amplified in this way.¹ My suspicion is that this development is, in large part, to enable the production of an increasing number of musicals on the outdoor stage, and it will be a matter of regret to me if we see fewer Shakespeare plays there as the years pass. Next season will see only one Shakespeare play on that stage, and only three in the repertory in total.

The Tempest

This production was staged in the Angus Bowmer Theatre and ran from February to November. The opening storm scene was a *tour de force*, and won deserved applause at the performance I saw. A cloth covered the stage at the opening, which was lit to become the sea. Ropes were pulled across the stage and rope ladders let down as the dancers controlled the storm. At the end of the scene, the model boat disappeared into the small trap, while the cloth was sucked into the central trap, and the set became the island. The set was primarily a large raised rectangular block, set off-centre from the audience. The upstage right corner of this carpeted block was raised so that it formed a slope with a triangular point. Behind the block was a platform, high at the stage right end, used for some entrances and exits. The block also had trapdoors: a small trap downstage left and a large trap centre-stage. There was also a concealed hole in the carpet centre-stage, through which Caliban burst for his first entrance, to gasps from the audience, and which was later used by Ariel for her entrance in 3.2.²

¹ 'OSF Implements Sound Enhancement System in Outdoor Theatre', *Oregon Shakespeare Festival* <https://www.osfashland.org/press-room/press-releases/sound-enhancement.aspx> [accessed 7 November 2014]

² Act, scene and line references are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. by G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

The shipwrecked characters wore Elizabethan/Jacobean dress. Trinculo had a ridiculous conical hat which, when removed, revealed a luxuriant and wild mop of hair. Denis Arndt, as Prospero, was bare-footed with a simple shirt and trousers, and a magic robe reminiscent of a beaded curtain. Miranda's dress was simple for most of the play until she assumed her wedding dress in 4.1. As Caliban, the muscular and athletic Wayne T. Carr wore only a loin cloth; it was hard to believe this was same actor who had played Demetrius as a callow schoolboy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2013. His body was covered in a yellow dye, and he wore black contact lenses.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the staging of Shakespeare's plays is the decision that directors make as to who is the central character. For example, I have seen productions of *Twelfth Night* which centre on Feste, on Malvolio, or on Viola, and one which centred on Olivia. In the case of *The Tempest*, while there may be debate as to who 'owns' the island, in most productions the play definitely belongs to Prospero. In the OSF production of 2014, however, the play most certainly belonged to Ariel and to four male dancers: together, they made a very substantial contribution to what was a stunning piece of visual theatre. Ariel had the greatest variety of costume. She was principally dressed in a white skirt with a tightly fitted white top. She had a red stripe down her face, and, for most of the play, wore a flaming red wig. When she re-entered in 1.2 like a water-nymph, she had blue bands on her skirt and wore a white wig. In 3.3, she was transformed into a terrifying winged harpy, hovering over the raised corner of the stage; and she became a goddess in 4.1 (combining the three roles mentioned in the text), rising up through the central trap-door with an elaborate head-dress and stilts under her long skirt. Her speech pattern was very distinctive, oratorical and deliberate, with carefully articulated consonants and round vowels. She also sang beautifully: almost all the songs in the play were hers, set to the music which evoked Eastern chants.

Apart from when she was a harpy, and in a harness, Ariel's flying was mostly effected via the dancers. These shaven-headed men had bare torsos with white body-paint and looked like Buddhist monks. The Playbill told us that these dancers were performing in the manner of Japanese Butoh, a style which emerged out of defeat after the Second World War, and which is characterised by slow, controlled movement. In effect they became a silent Chorus. They were seated in silence on the stage for thirty minutes before the play started, moving only slightly during this time. Whilst Prospero plotted

the storm, it was they who brought it about as his instruments, and their overall function was to enact his energy and power. Thus, as Prospero spoke his soliloquy in the final scene (beginning at line 33), the dancers circled him, the tempo of their movement representing his increasing excitement.

In the early moments of the production, I had some concerns that the dancers might prove a distraction. For example, their movements punctuated Prospero's opening speeches to Miranda in 1.2: they struck a new pose as he moved to a different phase of his narrative. However, my misgivings soon proved to be unfounded: when Prospero reminded Ariel of her treatment by Sycorax, the dancers seized her and became the cloven pine in which she had been imprisoned. When Ferdinand entered, the dancers barred his progress by circling him with branches. They were rocks on which characters leaned and the table on which the chess set was placed for the two lovers in 5.1; they cleared the set of furniture whenever necessary (including during the intermission, which came after 3.1); they changed Miranda's costume in 4.1, as well as being hounds in the same scene. The Masque in 4.1 consisted of an extended dance around Ariel. Throughout the performance they moved with a studied deliberation, only occasionally breaking out of their slow pace, so that, at the curtain call, they were the last to leave the stage, gliding off into the wings, waving slowly to the audience.

All of this concentration on Ariel and the Dancers had a consequent effect on Prospero's role in this production. He was onstage at the very opening of the play, manipulating a model boat downstage left while the storm took place behind him, but this was the most understated and low-key Prospero it was possible to imagine: all the energy went to Ariel and the dancers. There were also some difficulties hearing his lines throughout the play (and the audibility of the actors playing Gonzalo and Sebastian also proved problematic), none of it helped by the carpeted stage. Nevertheless, credit must be given to Denis Arndt as Prospero for the clarity of his verse-speaking.

Caliban floated almost as much as the dancers did. In his balletic performance, there were times when he almost seemed to be supporting his entire body weight on one hand. He stood upright only once before the very end of the play, for his speech on the beauties of the island in 3.2 (135ff.), a scene not witnessed by Prospero or Miranda, in which Caliban's magnificence is in sharp contrast to the drunken foolishness of

Stephano and Trinculo. In the final scene, he stood upright once more as he was acknowledged by Prospero and given Prospero's formal robe: a sign that the island was indeed his.

There were several original and charming touches in this production. Miranda addressed the audience directly at 1.2.445 with her question 'Why speaks my father so ungently?', and the audience was encouraged to clap along with Caliban's freedom song at the end of 2.2. In 3.1, the log was too heavy for Ferdinand but Miranda managed to carry it easily. In 3.2, Ariel manipulated Trinculo's mouth as he lied, and Trinculo received a fine comic beating from Stephano later in this scene, complete with exaggerated slaps to the face. At the end of the scene, Trinculo's warnings on drink (line 79) were addressed directly to the audience, and prefaced with the word 'Kids'. Perhaps the most charming touches involved the lovers. When Ferdinand offered his hand in 3.1.88, Miranda simply held out her own hand in response: she had no idea that hands were for holding. Similarly, when they declared their love to Prospero in 4.1, he kept interposing his body between them.

There were relatively few changes to the text. The reference to Dido at 2.1.76ff was removed (possibly I was the only person who cared, because I had spent that morning explaining this line to a group who saw the same performance that I saw); in 2.2 'England' became 'Naples' (28) and 'doit' became 'penny' four lines later; and when Stephano extricated Trinculo from the gabardine in 2.2, 'siege' became 'turd' (106). There was also a moment in 1.2.323, when Caliban's curse – 'A south-west wind blow on ye' – became a fart joke.

The conclusion to the play was very well handled. Ariel's 'Do you love me, master?' (4.1.48) had real poignancy, as did Prospero's treatment of Caliban, which I referred to above. However, there was no danger that the ending would sink into sentimentality. Antonio, who had made no response at all to Prospero's story, was the last character to leave the stage, and, as he passed his brother, he dismissed him with a flick of his hand. I am told that, once out of sight, Antonio allowed his wave to become a single flick of a finger.

The Comedy of Errors

This production was staged in the Thomas Theatre and ran from February to November. It is the third staging of this play that I have seen at OSF and all three have been distinctively American in character. The 2004 production in the Angus Bowmer Theatre was set in Las Vegas, and the 2008 production on the Elizabethan Stage was set in the Wild West. I wonder whether earlier OSF productions had this flavour (it was staged eight times in the twentieth century), and I somehow doubt that: audio and video clips from the OSF archive suggest a more conservative and traditional approach to the plays in the Festival's past.

In the 2014 production, Ephesus became 'Harlemtown' (Harlem, New York) in the 1920s, Syracuse became Louisiana and the play had a predominantly black cast. A note in the Playbill suggested a connection between the separation of families in Shakespeare's play and the destruction of families resulting from slavery, but it was hard to see how this connection was manifest within the production itself, apart from Egeon's description of his travels in the opening scene. This speech was enlivened by video projections of pictures and maps, although these were somewhat marred by the fact that they were partially obscured by a large clock. No doubt the clock also restricted the viewing of some members of the audience, and I did wonder why the production did not simply use a projection on the fourth wall.

The audience was placed on three sides of the theatre. There was a curtain on the fourth side when the play opened; this was pulled back after the first scene to reveal three buildings: the Porcupine, Adriana's house and the Abbey (here called the "Soul Saving Station"). All three of these buildings had upper levels, and Adriana's house could be revolved to display either an exterior or interior. Apart from the revolve, the set resembled the layout of the theatre in which the play was originally staged. In addition to the clock, which sat between two of the banks of seats and ticked down the time to the execution (six o'clock in this production rather than five o'clock as the text suggests), there was a trapdoor which brought the condemned Egeon on to the stage, and also brought in a dining table for 2.1.

This was a fast-paced, almost breathless performance with just over 90 minutes running time and no intermission. On the night I saw it, there was a full house and the audience clearly enjoyed the show. In addition to fine performances from the principals, we were

also entertained by Mark Murphey as an Irish policeman and as Gustave, a white butler in Adriana's household, and by Ramiz Monsel as a wonderfully effete Angelo. He was also part of the show's running gag: every time the chain was mentioned, a small bell rang, and, eventually, Monsel and the others paused as they waited for this to happen: in my ideal version of this production, the chiming of the bell would have been linked with the movement of the clock. The Abbess had a somewhat more extended role in this production, appearing on stage from time to time, singing gospel hymns, and we had a female Doctor Pinch.

Like the Las Vegas production in 2004, this version of the play had a single actor playing both Dromios, and another playing both Antipholi. There were subtle differences in the costuming of the different twins (one Dromio had a different check pattern on his jacket from the other, whilst the Antipholi's jackets had subtly different stripes). When, in the final scene, both twins had to be on stage at the same time, the costume differences were more exaggerated. The two actors playing the extra twins in this scene were not identified in the Playbill, but were physically very different from the actors playing the main roles. I wondered whether there was enough difference between the pairs of twins in the principal part of the play for the audience to follow the plot, but that did not seem to be a problem: my own preference for this play (and for *Twelfth Night*) would be to have the twins as dissimilar as possible, so that it is only the characters on the stage who see them as identical.

As with the 2004 Las Vegas version of this play, the newly arrived Antipholus and Dromio had distinctively slow Southern accents, which leads me to wonder whether it is now the case that the visitors are to be played as foolish and gullible? I have not seen this as an aspect of UK productions (using non RP accents for the strangers, for example from the West Country or the North-East). On the contrary, I am used to seeing Antipholus of Syracuse in UK productions characterised as sensitive and thoughtful.

Shortly after the production opened, I had a private discussion with the dramaturg, Martine Kei Green-Rogers, about the extent to which the play was cut. She confirmed that some 1541 lines remained from the 1873 of Shakespeare's text. She explained that there were other tweaks to the text: for example, references to the Centaur were changed to the Lenox Lounge, and there was also a reference to Marcus Garvey at one point. To

be honest, I had some misgivings that this production might, at times, come close to racial stereotyping, but the director, Kent Gash, has a strong track record of work, including *Langston in Harlem*, which he co-wrote, so I trust his judgement.

In this energetic and engaging production, the only time at which I felt the momentum drop was in the scene between Antipholus of Louisiana (Syracuse) and Luciana (3.2). That was my only reservation, however, and the production ended with the all the cast re-costumed in white clothes, joining in a joyous wedding dance.

Richard III

As I noted above, *Richard III*, which ran from June to October, was the first production at OSF in which the actors' voices were amplified with microphones. For the most part, I did not find this distracting or disturbing (although I think one of the mics did cut out for a moment on the night I saw this production). On a technical note, I felt that, when actors were speaking from the platforms above the vomitoria, the sound tended to echo around the theatre and become unlocalised; on the other hand, the microphones did enhance Richard's dream in 5.3, by allowing for added reverb and echo when the various ghosts were speaking.

This production was fast-paced and fluid, making good use of the tiring house façade and its various levels, without feeling the need to dress the set unnecessarily (it made some use of actors standing at the vomitoria, but not so frequently as to be a distraction). Indeed, almost the only occasion on which this was staged in a manner one would not have witnessed in Shakespeare's day (microphones apart) was in the use of a mottled projection onto the façade when Richard had his dream (5.3). At the very top of the set was the emblem of a rose, which was the white Rose of York for the greater part of the play, becoming the red of Lancaster with increasing frequency in the battle scenes of the final Act, and then ultimately resolving into the Tudor rose of a united England: a red outer circle and white inner circle.

The production was costumed in Elizabethan style, and was visually splendid, not least when large numbers of the cast were on the stage in court scenes, at the very beginning and for Richard's coronation (in 4.2). In a departure from recent stagings of

Shakespeare plays at OSF, this production did actually start with the opening lines from Shakespeare's text.

OSF has been fortunate over the years to have actors capable of taking on the demands of the role of Richard, notably Marco Barricelli in 1993 and James Newcomb in 2005. This year, Dan Donahue's Richard was magnificent, both vocally and physically, yet his performance did not overbalance the production: there was strength in depth throughout the cast, especially in terms of the speaking of the text: microphones can help with volume, but clarity comes only from training.

Donohue wore a brace on his left leg, and held his left arm in such a way that the hand was at a right-angle, palm facing upwards. This led to a visual joke in 4.2 when Richard concealed an orb and sceptre under his coronation robes, with the orb held awkwardly in his left hand. This was something of an anachronism, since these elements of royal regalia were not introduced until the coronation of Charles II (indeed, Richard in this scene looked as if he had stepped from the Joseph Michael Wright 1661 portrait of that event) but it was a good joke, nevertheless.

This was a production which looked to mine the possibilities of humour which are certainly present in the text. Robert C. Jones wrote many years ago about the ways in which the actor playing Richard engages with the audience to win their support for his audacity,³ and that was certainly at work here, or, perhaps more accurately, at play here, because the production demonstrated very clearly how comic effects work on the stage which are not evident from the script on the page.

In his opening speech, Richard extended the description of himself as being 'rudely stamp'd' (1.1.16) with the added (non-textual) words 'in every part', pointing towards his genitals, and got the first laugh of the night. There were audible gasps from the audience at his wooing of Anne in 1.2, and, when that wooing was successfully concluded, the line 'Was ever woman in this humor woo'd?' (227) was accompanied by a gesture by which Richard swept the audience in search of such a woman. Dan

³ Robert C. Jones, *Engagement with Knavery* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1986)

Donohue has demonstrated his abilities as a comic actor in previous roles at OSF, notably a cameo in *She Loves Me* in 2010, the same year in which he played Hamlet.

There were several clever pieces of business which added to this sense of black humour. When the Murderers asked Richard for a warrant in 1.3 (at line 341), it was evident as he reached into his cloak that he had lots of warrants in preparation for many murders ahead. At the end of 2.1, the dying King Edward staggered and fell, losing his crown, which Richard grasped. When, in 3.1, the young Duke of York asked Richard for his dagger, Richard presented it to him, the point to the child's chest, with the line 'with all my heart' (111). Perhaps most macabre of all, when the head of the executed Hastings was brought on stage (in a bag) in 3.5, it was passed around the actors, before eventually being offered to the audience. Overall, this was a Richard who was less sexy than some others I have seen, relying more on wit and intelligence than sensuality to achieve his aims.

There was a cast of twenty-four actors playing the forty-one roles required by the text and one piece of casting was particularly intelligent: the production added the role of Mistress Shore who spoke the words of Hastings, whose role was performed by the deaf actor Howie Seago. There are seven references to Mistress Shore in the text of the play, the most damning of which comes in 3.5, when the reason for the execution of Hastings is explained by Buckingham: 'I never look'd for better at his hands / After he once fell in with Mistress Shore' (51-2). Yet the text makes no requirement for Mistress Shore to be seen on the stage (she makes one fleeting appearance in Olivier's 1955 film). In this production, however, she was a significant presence in the first half of the play, being quite literally the voice of Hastings, and therefore a political force to be reckoned with. This idea was developed with intelligence and wit, so that, in 3.2, the scene in which Hastings receives visitors in the early hours of the morning, these visitors discover him in bed with Mistress Shore, to the embarrassment of all concerned.

There were excellent performances in this production from Kate Hurster as Lady Anne, Robin Goodrin Nordli as Queen Elizabeth, Franchelle Stewart Dorn as Queen Margaret and from Judith-Marie Bergan as the Duchess of York. Al Espinosa was a powerful Tyrrell, and Anthony Heald a Buckingham who was pompous and vain rather than cunning and manipulative. I was most struck, however, by the performance of Jeffrey

King as Clarence, especially in his dawning realisation in 1.4 of how he had been betrayed by Richard.

The production made good use of the upper level of the stage. Margaret appeared there in 1.3 and was able to overhear what was being said before she intervened. Rivers, Grey and Vaughan were executed on the upper level in 3.3, and Richard reluctantly accepted the crown from this level in 3.7, flanked by two hooded holy men, while the citizens stood below. This scene was subtly altered so that the citizens left the stage, allowing Richard the opportunity to unmask the 'holy men' with great glee: they were revealed as the murderers, and this gave an added irony to the line 'let us to our holy work again' (246), which came right before the intermission.

The coronation and the battle scenes of the second half of this production were staged with great economy. The tents of Richard and Richmond were simple banners pitched no more than a few yards from one another, and the shift in lighting, together with the changing colour of the rose, moved our attention from one side to the other.

One difficulty shared by a number of Shakespeare plays is that the closing speech is delivered after the principal actor has died, and the weight of those final lines often hangs heavy on those who outlive Hamlet, Macbeth or Lear and are required to bring the play to an end. In this case, it is Richmond who has the last word after Richard has been killed, and I did not feel that R. J. Foster had quite the voice to carry this off. Perhaps I am in error here, and there was a deliberate decision to represent Richmond as a much less powerful figure than Richard, but that places an extra burden on an actor in his first season at OSF: the audience cannot know that he can be a strong character and that he is intentionally playing a weak one. My preference would have been for a shift in the casting such that Jeffrey King played Clarence and Richmond (instead of Clarence and Catesby), and that R. J. Foster played Catesby. In the 2005 production, the role of Richmond was played by Danforth Comins, whose career has gone from strength to strength: I hope that R.J. Foster enjoys similar success.

Sometimes a performance will include a moment which could not have been anticipated or prepared for, especially when it is staged outdoors. On the night I saw this production, an owl swooped through the theatre and alighted on the very top of the

stage. Sadly, it was out of sight by the time Richard said to the Messenger ‘Out on you, owls! nothing but songs of death?’ (4.4.507).

The Two Gentleman of Verona

This production ran from June to October in the Allen Elizabethan Theatre, and I had high hopes for it. It was the first all-female production of a Shakespeare play at OSF, and had acquired the nickname ‘No Gents’ before it even opened. The photographs published in advance suggested that this was to be a visual treat, not least in its costuming. But in the event, I found the costuming and the set disappointing. I could appreciate that, as the Playbill said, ‘Elizabethan men’s clothing read much more feminine to our contemporary eye’, but I doubt that most of the audience would know that ‘pink was considered a male color’, and I suspect that few would have read this Playbill note in advance. The set had a large pink wall across the lower level, and pink balloon-like lights which were lowered at certain points during the action. The wall had one door in the centre and two smaller doors on each side. There was a fountain in the centre of the stage for the first half of the play.

The production opened by establishing Valentine and Proteus, in part through lots of back-slapping. This seemed to me very reminiscent of the gestures of the Principal Boy in traditional British pantomime, and it took a while to get over that reaction and to accept this pair as men. The opening was taken at some pace, with effective banter between Proteus and Speed, and between Julia and Lucetta, often directed to the audience. The actors playing Lucetta and Speed were both excellent (Sara Bruner as Speed was an understudy), but the downside of their success was to underline how little we saw of these characters later in the play, and how we missed them.

There was a neat piece of business with Julia playing with the pieces of the letter from Proteus, rubbing fragments together and encouraging them to ‘kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will’ (1.2.126), whilst simulating sex between the torn pieces of paper. In a sense this was an ironic reminder that there is almost no physical contact between the lovers in this play, and much more between the men.

The problem earlier in the season with the sound system and actors stationed on the vomitoria seemed to have been solved: indeed, there seemed to be times when the cast,

especially the outlaws, spoke without the aid of microphones. The verse speaking was clear and precise. 'Expedition' (1.3.77) had a full five syllables; the initial syllable in 'Milan' was consistently stressed; and, in 'persevers' (3.2.28) the emphasis fell on the second syllable. There was even a foreign language joke late in the production (4.1.33) when Valentine established his credentials as a linguist with the outlaws by saying 'My youthful travels therein made me happy' in a foreign accent.

The badinage over Valentine's letter to Silvia in 2.1 which involved both lovers and Speed was handled with wit and charm, and, once again, worked well because it was taken out to the audience. Proteus's parting from Julia (2.2.) was played on the upper level, and punctuated by the sounds of a ship's horn.

As is often the case with this play, the real stars were Launce and his dog Crab. K. T. Vogt is an actor with a gift for comedy, and she played Launce superbly (and also doubled as the Duke of Milan). When Crab started to move, she ad libbed 'Where're you goin'?', and she wiped off the drool he had left on her costume with an appropriate grimace of disgust.

As 2.4 began, the central doors in the pink wall were opened, and the scene began with a dance. An upper window in the stage left side of the tiring house facade was lit in readiness for Valentine's declaration (181) 'I must climb her window'. Launce appeared in 2.5 with a large staff, which proved to be a helpful prop for the phallic references to 'standing' (from line 20 onwards). This play has a rich mix of levels of humour, from the witty word play of the opening scenes to the vulgarity of Launce on his every appearance. In contrast, Proteus's soliloquy (2.6) was poignant and affecting (despite the fact that he is such a duplicitous character). It even contains an echo of *The Comedy of Errors* as he faces up to the danger of losing himself (20).

The first half drew to a close with more obvious humour. In 3.1, the Duke greeted the entrance of Valentine by singing 'That's Amore', and there was a good visual gag as the Duke turned from Valentine, having borrowed his cloak from him, leaving Valentine

some twenty lines to try to extricate himself from his hidden rope ladder while the Duke was facing the other way. Needless to say, the attempt failed.

The intermission came, unusually, part way through a scene: it was taken after 'Hapless Valentine!' (3.1.262). The scene was resumed while the intermission was still taking place, with many of the audience not yet back in their seats, and with the house light full on. Launce started with a monologue from atop one of the vomitoria, which then continued into an abbreviated version of her banter with Speed. This interlude included references to the audience coming back, and to the need to wait for a loud motorcycle to pass by outside. It concluded 'Stay tuned for the second part', and won deserved applause.

The second half was something of a disappointment. The version of 'Who is Silvia' sung in 4.2 seemed to come from a different concept altogether: it was soft rock and might have derived from an album by Alison Krauss and Robert Plant. The audience gasped at the audacity of Proteus saying of Julia 'she is dead' (105), but fell short of actually booing.

Even 4.4, with Launce and Crab did not fully take flight, and that was in part because Shakespeare's text seems to need some help. Launce tells the audience that he has been to deliver Crab as a present to Mistress Silvia, but it is stated a little later that he has taken the wrong dog, and that the dog intended as a present has been stolen. I did not feel that enough was done to get this story across clearly to the audience: the lines needed to be taken more slowly, and Proteus needed some business to establish the two different dogs in our minds.

The final scene was complicated and somewhat confusing. Coloured discs dropped from on high, suspended on strings, presumably representing leaves(?), as Valentine above spoke his opening speech from the upper level. Silvia has no lines after the attempted rape by 'false perjur'd Proteus' (39), and it is always a conundrum how to handle that silence: in this case she was hidden behind the outlaws who were stationed by the stage left vomitorium waiting for their entrance. There was a significant blocking

problem right in these final moments of the play. Proteus was hidden from view by Julia, and I could not see to whom he was addressing his final substantive speech (from 110 onwards). In the event the two women left the stage together, followed by the two back-slapping men.

When the cast came on for their curtain call, they acknowledged the audience first as males (by bowing) and then as females (with curtsies). However, unusually for performances at OSF, few members of the audience left their seats for a standing ovation.