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Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre presents



William Shakespeare's

The Merry Wives of Windsor

14th - 19th March 2011 at 7.30pm

Matinee: Sat. 19th at 2.30pm

(An amateur production by arrangement with Samuel French)

Welcome

Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre is supported and run by volunteers who regularly give up their time and without whom we could not deliver the standard of production and customer service which our patrons have come to expect. Some of these people you will encounter tonight, others fulfil a less visible, but no less vital role.

Backstage Crew, Front-of-House, Bar and Coffee Bar, Members, Friends, Young Rep and all other helpers - we are deeply indebted to everyone involved - **Thank You**.

Some information which you may find helpful:

The Bar is open from 6.45 until 11.00pm on performance evenings and drinking-up time is 20 minutes afterwards.

Coffee, **tea and confectionery** are available in the foyer from 6.45.

All interval refreshments may be ordered before the performance to avoid queuing later.

The car park is open from 6.30. until 11.00pm on performance evenings; overspill parking is available in the Staffordshire University car park further along Leek Road.

Neither the Rep nor Staffordshire University can accept responsibility for damage to, or loss of vehicles.

Please note that smoking is not allowed in any part of the theatre building.

We hope that you enjoy your evening with us.



PLEASE ENSURE THAT MOBILE PHONES ARE SWITCHED OFF DURING THE PERFORMANCE.

Booking Information

Our box office is open from the Monday preceding each Rep production through until the last night of the show from 5.00 to 8.00pm.

Tel: 01782 209784

Book tickets during opening hours from Music Mania, 4/5/ Piccadilly Arcade, Hanley.

Tel: 01782 206000

Why not join our free MAILING LIST?

Simply complete a mailing list form, available in the bar and leave in the box situated at the Box Office.

www.stokerep.org.uk

Find out 'What's On' and 'What's News' by visiting the Rep's website.

Information about current and forthcoming productions, shows, concerts and activities is available at the click of a mouse.

Join our emailing list by registering at howard.goodall@stokerep.org.uk

Thank You

As always, we are indebted to the St John Ambulance Brigade, whose members voluntarily attend all our performances.

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Ring: Paul Findley (01782) 644376, Mobile: (07785) 785120 Catch sneaky previews, tasters and teasers of forthcoming Rep productions by checking out the Rep's channel on:





Since November 2009, the Stoke Rep Players has had its own page on Facebook which allows access to all the information about every Rep Players' production as it takes place.

It is interactive so members can leave comments about our productions on the page's 'wall' or even write reviews. They can comment on video and photographs, join in discussions, share things with their Facebook friends.

Members of the page will see 'wall posts' appear in their home page's 'news-feed' as well as receive 'updates' in their Facebook message inbox.

To access the Rep Players' Facebook page you can click on the link which says 'find us on Facebook' on:

The Rep's main website at: www.stokerep.org.uk or, alternatively, you can type:

www.facebook.com/stoke.rep.theatre.players



You can now get all the latest news about the Rep productions and join in dialogues with audience, cast and Rep company members. Find out about what's happening at the Rep, as it happens.

The Gast

George Page:
Mistress Page:
Anne Page:
Frank Ford:
Mistress Ford:
Pistol/John:
Nym/Robert:

Sir Hugh Evans: Doctor Caius:

Mistress Quickly:

The Host: Fenton:

Sir John Falstaff:

Robin:

Robert Shallow:

Abraham Slender:

Peter Simple: John Rugby

Nick Proud Jane Feeney Laura Mellor John Wicks Sarah Stockdale Oliver Hilsdon Matt Bateman Martin Alcock **David Bryan** Caroline Keen **Richard Morrey** Mathew O'Connor **Derek Yeomans** Joseph Wood **Chris Salisbury** Ian Brereton **Paul Deakin**

The Children of Windsor

Andreya Georgiou Amy Keen-Wicks, Benjamin Wood Sam Wright

There will be a twenty minute interval between Act One and At Two

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The Grew

Director: Stage Director:

Set Designer: Musical Director:

Choreographer:

Stage Manager: Set Construction:

Set Constituetion.

Sound Operator:

Programme Design:

Company Photographer:

Costumes:

Costumes:

Props:

Wigs:

Lighting Design & Operation:

David Bryan Richard Masters

David Bryan Marie Bateman

Julie Wood Terry Wright

David Bryan, Peter Gatensbury,

Peter Logan, Richard Masters,

James McIntyre, Jamie Wood

Malcolm Rushton

Paul Jones

Sylvia Wright

Emma Kirk & Robyn Mather

John Cumberlidge

Birmingham Costume Hire

Janet Smith

Peter Croft

Coming soon . . . the Rep Players' production of Daphne du Maurier's

Rebecca

2nd to 7th May 2011 at 7.30pm Matinee: Saturday at 2.30pm

Tickets available now from

the Rep Box Office: tel 01782 209784

or Music Mania: Piccadilly Arcade, Hanley

tel 01782 206000

An Everyday Story of Windsor Folk

In this, Shakespeare's only English comedy, audiences are introduced to Merry England in its truest form. Unlike the history plays which offer narratives of significant military and political events, or the tragedies of kings, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* moves away from the aristocratic, elite perspective of the English national identity, to observe a slice of the everyday lives of the inhabitants and visitors who make up the community of the small town clustered around the foot of the castle walls.

When we do encounter a member of the upper echelons it is in the rather ridiculous form of Falstaff, who has been transplanted from the 'Henry histories' into a modern Elizabethan world in which debts must be paid and the women have minds of their own. In many respects this is a slice of life which nowadays might find itself appearing on our radios and televisions in the form of serial drama (The Archers, maybe?) or 'fly on the wall' type documentaries, charting, as it does, the everyday dramas which form the fabric of life. Jealous husbands, suspected adultery, young love, devious employees, revenge - it's all there and it is this very collection of ordinariness which makes The Merry Wives unique among Shakespeare's other comedies. There are no exotic locations, no multiple sets of twins, no sorcery and no young love struggling against the world. Indeed, the main 'love interest' and humour of the play lies in the portly and elderly Falstaff's thwarted attempts to simultaneously seduce Mistresses Page and Ford in an attempt to avail himself of their husbands' fortunes. The fact that they are two steps ahead of him every step of the way and prove without doubt that women can have both virtue and brains, are indications of the way in which women were beginning to assert themselves.

However, honour and honesty were still of paramount importance within Elizabethan society and the fact that a man's reputation could be ruined by the inappropriate behaviour and actions of his wife is illustrated (albeit to an extreme degree) by the wild jealousy, suspicion and extreme behaviour exhibited by Mistress Ford's husband. The wives, acutely aware of the need to preserve their reputations, guard them vigorously and in plotting their revenge against Falstaff, will only embark upon schemes which will not sully their good name and which will strengthen, not undermine decent behaviour in their community.

When considering revenge, it is interesting to note the differing ways in which the men and women tackle the affronts they receive during the action. Whilst the men rush around pontificating loudly and arranging duels, the women take a far more considered (or possibly devious) approach by plotting public humiliations for Falstaff which will have the maximum impact and finally put an end to his lechery, proving beyond a doubt that:

'Wives may be merry, and yet honest too'

In Performance

The title page of the earliest edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* states that the play was widely performed, both at court in front of Queen Elizabeth I and in the public theatres of the time. Leap forward several hundred years and we find that it is still one of the most popular and regularly performed of Shakespeare's plays. Professional companies, like the RSC, have staged it frequently and the wide range of comic parts ensures that it remains a perennial favourite for amateur theatre groups worldwide.

Its fast paced and fun filled style lends itself particularly well to summer outdoor productions. Indeed, performing the play in the courtyard at the wonderfully preserved Little Morton Hall last July, one of our area's other drama groups, Alsager Community Theatre, had the most perfect backdrop imaginable as the protagonists rushed in and out and round and round the magnificent old building.

But it is not just the setting of the play which allows such flexibility in its staging. In his introduction to the play, Stanley Wells says: 'The concept of community in Windsor is central to the revenge plots and the comedy of the play . . . The period . . saw massive migration from the countryside to the towns and corresponding increase in the perceived threat of violence and social disorder. This was a period in which social peace and calm was understood not as a natural state for human beings, but as something which needed to be fought for and legislated for on a daily basis. . .Good citizens were those who had a reputation for honesty and peaceable dealing and individuals cared deeply about their good name.' The central themes of community, women empowering themselves to take matters into their own hands and their attempts to create a more ordered and civilised society gives the playa very modern feel which allows directors great artistic freedom when it comes to relocating the action to different periods in history. Recent productions have set the action in the 1940s and it may not be inconceivable that one day we may see it interpreted within today's celebrity culture of WAGs, gossip mags and past-their-prime, overweight conmen.

It has been turned into operas in several European languages, converted into plays within the constraints of the Japanese theatre form and in 1929 appeared as Ralph Vaughan Williams' opera, *Sir John in Love* in which the composer employed twenty folk tunes to emphasise the connection between the play and the idealised myth of the golden age of Merry England.

It is a play which allows for huge flexibility and Stratford has seen a wide variety of interpretations, from Henry Ayliff's 1937 production which created an entire half timbered street, to Bill Alexander's 1985 production in which he set the action in the 1950s. Tonight the merry wives romp into the Rep - have a wonderful evening in their company.



Alsager Community Theatre

at Alsager Civic Centre presents

The Crucible

by Arthur Miller
Wednesday 23rd to Saturday 26th March 2011
at 7.45pm

Tickets: £7 (£6 concessions)

Available from Alsager Library from 1st March or by telephoning (01260) 276165 from 10th March

THE YOUNG REP

presents

KES

by Lawrence Till adapted from the novel *A kestrel for a Knave* by Barry Hine

13th to 16th July 2011 at 7.30pm

Tickets: £6 (Students £5)
available from the Rep Box Office
tel: 01782 209784
Stoke Rep Theatre, Leek Rd., S-o-T, ST4 2TR



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