

# ERRORS: Shakespeare in the park

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for the other, leading to various sticky wickets ranging from arrest to marital strife.

To his credit, director John Nagle (who, with his wife, Jena Neccason, heads the Vermont Shakespeare Company) knows "The Comedy of Errors" is a goofy bit of fluff and runs with it. Actors breaking away for brief soliloquies leave their cast mates behind in freeze-frame stillness until returning to the scene at hand. The cast of nine takes on multiple roles, donning Charlie Chaplin-esque mustaches or glaringly fake beards and sometimes neglecting (intentionally, we think) to remove their facial hair before returning as another character. Costumes and props are bizarrely anachronistic: An actor in antiquated, vaguely piratical garb munches on snacks from what appears to be modern-day movie-theater popcorn boxes. A giddy, surreal plot deserves giddy, surreal direction, and Nagle delivers.

The cast clearly understands the tone Nagle wants. Chastain and Matisa produce tremendous energy and theatrical dexterity in their dual dual roles. Matisa man-

ages to keep a regal air despite the wackiness, and contributes droll humor. Chastain toes the high wire between delightful and over the top and, fortunately, never falls off. His Jim Carrey-like rubbery expressions beget laughter without words, and his words — often emoted with the force of a woman giving birth — can be hilarious, especially when one of the Dromios bemoans the unwanted love of a rotund woman who is "no longer from head to toe than hip to hip; she is spherical, like a globe."

The two women most affected by the comingling of twins, Adriana and her sister, Luciana (Katelin Wilcox), are pitch-perfect. As Adriana, McLeod comes unglued with all the confusion, at one point donning sunglasses and clutching a margarita glass like a derailed starlet. Wilcox provides rare moments of stability in an earthquake of befuddlement.

The three Vermonters in the cast — Robert Nuner, Mark Roberts and Ruth Wallman — deliver fine if brief performances. Nuner is especially good as the morose father of the twins, demonstrating a decidedly Shakespearean baritone that

instantly commands respect. Daniella Rabbani shines in several roles, especially as a slinky courtesan. One of the few misses comes from Parrish Hurley, who's good as a merchant and a goldsmith but as a devilish conjurer inexplicably quivers like a junkie in withdrawal, tipping the production too far into the realm of cartoonish exaggeration.

One of the biggest stars of the night is the setting. The cove of trees that provides the backdrop for the stage not only becomes part of the set, it creates a natural sound screen that lets the audience hear nothing but the actors' powerful voices. The wide-open spaces that stretch behind the rows of bleachers give the audience a sense that there's a vast Mediterranean Sea out there in a way a four-walled theater just can't.

Oh, and one more thing: Beware of any program notes regarding actors claiming to have acted in "Multiplicity" or in a film with the Olsen twins. Almost nothing in "The Comedy of Errors" is quite what it seems.

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