

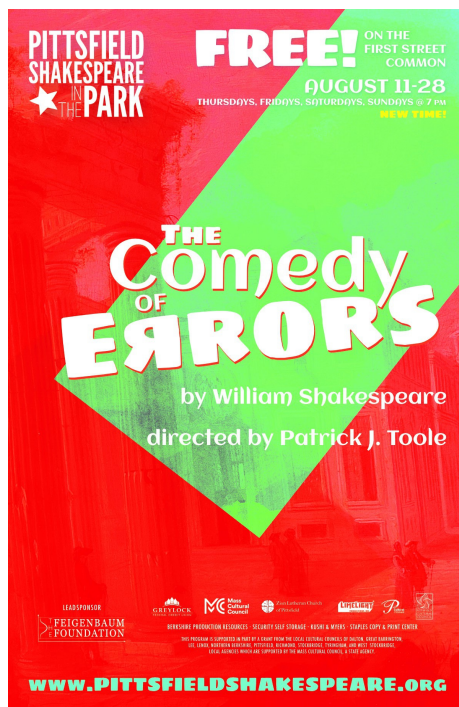
Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park, Pittsfield, MA

The Comedy of Errors, by William Shakespeare. Directed by Patrick J. Toole.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“The why of the wherefor.”

One of the funniest plays ever written has been given an even funnier interpretation by the still youthful Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park company, now in its seventh season at the First Street Common. An excellent cast, many of them in multiple roles, bring a combination of both improvisation and slapstick performance styles into the rigid plotting by Shakespeare and members of the cast, at the performance I saw on Friday, August 12, added things Will S. would never have conceived of. For example when a gold chain, a plot point, got stuck on an actor who needed to relinquish it the actress playing Luciana loudly remarked “Oy!” which got as big a laugh as any other line in the play.



The story deals with two sets of twins, separated in infancy, who wind up in the same place at the same time Antipholus of Ephesus, played with strength and security by Christopher Brophy, is a harsh, married man who tends to dally with courtesan and abuse his wife. His twin brother Antipholus of Syracuse, played by Cole Seitz, is a mild-mannered man on a quest. He and his servant Dromio of Syracuse, Allison S. Galen, are searching the known world for their long-lost brothers. Dromio’s Ephesian twin, played by Cate D’Angelo, like his master, has no idea that he was a twin. The two Ephesian men were raised by strangers in Carthage when their mother disappeared after saving them from drowning. She ended up in Ephesus where she entered a religious order and has grown to be the Abbess, is played by Sally McCarthy. Suddenly, without realizing it, the whole family has ended up in Syracuse and there the errors of the title occur, the confusions that prompt the comedy. Get it? Got it. Good!

Glenn Barrett, who played Egeon, a merchant from Syracuse who is the father of the two Antipholuses, Doctor Pinch, and a fish-monger, who later switches to nuts when fish aren’t selling, is an old-hand at Shakespeare and is one of the best interpreters of Shakespeare’s language. McCarthy, who doubles as a merchant and a courtesan’s assistant, also handles her speeches well and makes the serious side of things as humorous as they can ever be. As the wife of Antipholus of Syracuse, Adriana, Tess McHugh does a fine job of harassing her husband while professing love for him and her sister, Luciana, played by Julie Castagna, secretly falls in love with the man’s softer side (actually his twin brother), and tries to hide it but is unsuccessful. The courtesan is played by baritone-voiced Diana Steele who also plays the Ephesian Dromio’s wife, Luce. Alex Folts played the thankless role of the Duke of Ephesus.

Director Patrick J. Toole has moved his cast through the complications of the story in a masterful manner and reduced the play's five acts to a single, non-stop experience that takes about two hours to perform. He has added sound effects that are as funny in the playing as the play itself. The set, designed by Ron Piazza and built by Sam Slack is terrific as are Peggy Walsh's costumes. All in all, this is one of the funniest shows of the season, one you deserve to experience.

+ 08/14/2022 +

The Comedy of Errors plays at the Common on First Street in Pittsfield, MA through August 28. Tickets are Free. Bring a chair or something to sit on.