

Shakedxpeare & Co., Lenox, MA

Shake It Up: A Shakespeare Cabaret, co-created by Jacob Ming Trent and Allyn Burrows.

Directed by Allyn Burrows

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Here’s Rue for you.”

Familiar Shakespeare scenes and sonnets flesh out this more than clever revue, a musical excursion through love and deception devised by actor and singer Jacob Ming-Trent. In a brilliant flash of inspiration he has devised a 90 minute show that could . . .and should. . .run all summer instead of just one week. A company of twelve players fill the Tina Packer Stage at Shakespeare & Co in Lenox, Massachusetts; they fill it with music, merriment and love/



Photo:Katie McKellick.

Ming-Trent has not only conceived the show, he is the nominal star of the event. He takes center stage and rarely relinquishes it, even when he’s not there. Others may have their moments, their scenes, the solos, but none take that center stage microphone. Director Allyn Burrows has given the creator his place in the sun and that’s that.



Jacob Ming-Trent; Photo:Katie McKellick.

The company includes Jennifer Apple, Gregory Boover, Johnny Irion, Jennie M. Jadow, Jom “Chetz” Keegan, Benny Kohn, Raya Malcolm, Merlin McCormick, Conor Meehan, Jaclyn Stevenson and Burrows

himself. None of them are identified in the program with the material they perform.

Jazz and Blues stylings dominate the first half of the show and the second half opens with tributes to ‘Sesame Streer’ Leonard Bernstein and Judy Garland. Shakes and Co. Regular Gregory Boover has a single solo, playing with thr band most of the time and, for my money, should have had a second song all to himself.

Scenes from “Hamlet,” “Romeo and Juliet”, Twelfth Night” and “King Lear” punch home the relevance of William Shakespeare’s words to the songs that surround them. They are all well played moments, entertaining and moving.

Even “The Dark Lady of the Sonnets” gets her time on stage in the “Elephant



Gregory Boover; Photo:Katie McKellick.



Raya Malcom;
Photo:Katie McKellick.

Lounge” setting for the show. Ming-Trent and Burrows must be congratulated for this modern presentation of the finest moments Shakespeare can provide a modern, younger audience while still engaging their solid, stolid older admirers. The show is quick, entertaining and fun and, as said above, deserves a much longer run.

+ 07/03/2024 +

Shake It Up: A Shakespeare Cabaret runs on the Tina Packer Stage at Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble Street, Lenox, MA though July 7. For information and tickets go to www.Shakespeare.org