

# You may not like Will-O-Way's 'As You Like It'

By Helen Zucker  
special writer

Alas, alack a day, as old Will Shakespeare would have said. The Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre production of "As You Like It" does not carry me into the Forest of Arden. Despite excellent music on the harpsichord from Dave Wilson, recorder by Mark Finlay and lovely tunes from Jan Polver playing the Irish harp, the play simply doesn't lift off the boards.

The Will-O-Way troupe excels at musicals and modern drama. I've no idea why Will-O-Way decided to end an excellent season with a 16th century play filled with gorgeous, difficult language, inverted metaphors and characters that call for immensely experienced actors.

Performances continue through June 27 at the theater in Bloomfield Township. Eileen T. Weiss, a proficient actress, seems to be carrying the weight of the entire play on her shoulders. True, Rosalind, alias Ganymede, is a leading role. And Ms. Weiss does her lively best.

## review

**HARRY LOUCKS** is light on his feet as Touchstone, the witty clown; George Martin lends his sweet face to the role of the godfathered, exiled Duke; and Duke Wellington makes for a somewhat amusing as the melancholy Jacques. Jacques has the best lines in the play, and further rehearsals will probably help matters a bit.

Steve Pyykkonen is strong as the bitchy brother, Oliver. I can't believe his conversion; neither does Pyykkonen — he seems totally befuddled at finding himself a nice brother at the finale. Ken Ponagajla is fitfully amusing as Le Beau, a courtier. His white outfit sets you up for giggles, and you wish you could follow through with the belly laughs this character is meant to get. I wish I knew why Melvin Hardiman's strong voice is so muffled throughout the production. He's supposed to be Amiens, a singer, a man who makes the forest ring with sound.

Hardiman has the voice to make the Grand Canyon ring. Please unuzzle him. The Duke's men are supposed to be leading a lusty, happy life in the forest. The play is a fantasy, a romance. Grand sounds should ring among the trees. But the pace creeps, and the voices falter.

WELL, THE main problem is lan-

guage. All the actors seem to be speaking in the accent of their choice. Shakespeare wrote soaring English; he never wrote in any other language. During the course of the evening, I heard a Norwegian shepherd, assorted Irish dialects, courtiers from Iowa, the deep South and Spain. I wished I were seeing the wonderful productions such as "Zorba," "Man of La Mancha," "Oliver" all over again, and I had the

feeling some of the actors wished they were back playing in those productions. Those were plays the actors understood. Nonetheless, a lot of hard work is evident, and the second act picks up quite a bit. G. Timothy Hall, an actor with a lot of appeal, is out of his depth as Orlando. Ms. Weiss carries the ball in the forest scenes between the love-stricken Orlando and the "fair youth, Ganymede."

Helen King's costumes are lovely, and often funny. All the hats are wonderful. And Tim Hall is to be com-

mended for the set. Experienced Tyne Turner does fine on lighting. Celia Merrill Turner directed, and Dee Dwelley is associate director. Shirley Benay coached the children's choir; they sang sweetly. But Shakespeare did not want children in this play. His pages were young men who sang like maddened goats at the wedding feast. I look forward eagerly to seeing the musicals Will-O-Way is doing this summer. I am willing to bet that "Damn Yankees" will be a gorgeous explosion of 20th century sounds.

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