

# Sparks fly with Benedick, Beatrice

Performances of "Much Ado About Nothing" continue in repertory through Nov. 8 at the Festival Theatre at the Stratford Festival in Stratford, Ont. The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers is a promotional sponsor for the festival's 39th season. For ticket information in metropolitan Detroit, call 964-4668.

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

Gorgeous costumes and striking sets on the thrust stage are production values that make the most of "Much Ado About Nothing," the Shakespearean comedy directed by Richard Monette at the Stratford Festival.

Golden Semple as Beatrice and Colm Feore as Benedick light the sparks in this sometimes confusing presentation about what happens to loving couples when friends and enemies interfere. In the Bard's other play at Stratford, the tragedy "Hamlet," actor Feore has more serious problems to contend with, but in "Much Ado" a lighter side comes to

the fore.

He easily matches wits with Semple, giving a sensitive portrayal of the indifferent bachelor who doesn't have marriage on his mind until he mistakenly believes Beatrice is in love with him. Semple brings excitement to playing Beatrice, a red-headed, fire-and-ice combination, who likewise doesn't realize she cares for Benedick until she is told that he is in love with her.

Their friends' scheme works, and the battling duo, who didn't fathom they really cared for each other, gets together after many amusing encounters.

IN CONTRAST to the sophisticated lovers are Paul Miller and Sionle Boll as Claudio and Hero. A schemer get the naive Claudio to suspect his equally innocent Hero of betraying him, and things go from bad to worse before they get better.

As Hero, Boll seems rather lackluster, both in appearance and performance. Her makeup is pale, her hair is mousy, and she doesn't have any youthful exuberance. Miller gives a fair portrayal of Claudio. The rest of the cast members han-



Ethel Simmons

die their roles competently, but without any special note, except for Bill Bedford playing Dogberry, Chief Constable. As the comedy relief, he is outstanding, making every line an entertaining one that brings laughs.

Also carrying off the roles well are two Irish setter show dogs (one owned by David and Christine Rice of Westland), who cross the stage with an actor holding them on a leash in a hunting scene. The dogs, with their magnificent, reddish-glossy coats look every bit the champions they are.

Despite the show's slow start, "Much Ado About Nothing" does get

rolling when Beatrice and Benedick start to share the stage. And the richness of the costumes, in beautiful fabrics, colors and design, are exceptional.

Action on the thrust stage is more than eye-filling, as the actors move about on several levels of the three-quarter surround. The set transforms from a courtyard to a grand interior of a church with altar for wedding vows.

Benedick has the funniest line of the play when disaster strikes during Claudio and Hero's wedding. "This looks not like a nuptial!" Benedick says in a glorious aside.

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Goldie Semple and Colm Feore discover the romantic sides of their nature in "Much Ado About Nothing" at the Stratford Festival.

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