

To See, or Not to See: ?The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) [revised]?

A Review By Scott Johnston

To see, or not to see? That is the question.

If the subject of that question is Theatre Aurora's season opening ?The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised]? then the answer is a resounding 'yes'.

This highly entertaining play, written by Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield, does exactly what the title says; summarizes all 37 of the Bard's plays in less than two hours, including intermission.

Even more challenging, it uses only three actors to do so.

While they don't perform all 1,122 roles, they do seem to cover a lot of them.

Shakespeare's plays can be a bit slow at times, but this one is far from it. As can be expected, the pacing is frantic, with myriad costume changes and props, as the actors bounce between multiple characters both on and off the stage.

The plays themselves are presented in a number of original ways: as rap songs, sporting event play by plays, cooking shows, audience participation pieces, even performed backwards (don't worry; that one will make sense when you see it).

There are lots of wonderful things to catch along the way: Romeo being played by a female lead and Juliet by a male cast member, characters doing their own sound effects, and many current event and pop culture references.

To pull this off, director Joey Ferguson has pulled together a terrific cast, including Elizabeth Coulter, Brian Fukuzawa and Andrew Pawarloo. Their ability to shift between characters, change costumes (not to mention keeping the unused props and costumes in the right places for their next appearance), maintain a hectic pace, improvise, and keep up with the sometimes complex wording and rapid-fire quips is impressive.

This is a play that never takes itself too seriously, and as such, it can be enjoyed by everyone, even if they're not an English literature enthusiast.

Whether you actually learn something if you use this play is not guaranteed, but you will laugh a lot.

Evening performances of ?The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [revised]? continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, September 20, 21, 22, 27, 28 and 29, with a matinee September 23. Information and tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.