

# Mid-Atlantic Traveler

Mid-Atlantic Traveler reviews the people, places, events, and foodways of the Roanoke, Shenandoah, Cumberland, and Susquehanna Valleys, with a particular emphasis on shows at the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, VA.

Monday, December 5, 2011

## Tis Pity She's a Whore



Patrick Earl as Giovanni in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore. Photo by Michael Bailey.

I attended a preview performance of the Almost Blasphemy troupe's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* at the American Shakespeare Center during the break between the Fall season and the Winter/Holiday season. I had read John Ford's brilliantly disturbing incestuous tragedy earlier in the year and was looking forward to the show with anticipation. I was not disappointed. If you are a fan of dark tragedy, then you will love this production.

I guess *'Tis Pity* is similar to *Romeo & Juliet*, in a twisted way. Giovanni, played brilliantly by Patrick Earl, fresh from his return from University is hot to trot for his sister Annabella (the always excellent Denice Mahler), and seeks the advice of Friar Bonaventura (Kevin Hauver) to deal with his moral dilemma. Of course, the Friar advises against this evil, but Giovanni can't help himself and tries to reason with the Friar that his love for his sister is not wrong. Well, we also find out that the feeling is mutual with Annabella, who is being courted by a series of men including Soranzo (Jake Mahler), Grimaldi (Michael Amendola), and the dandy Bergetto (a typically entertaining Rick Blunt complete with a wonderfully geeky sidekick, Poggio, played by Stephanie Holladay Earl). Annabella is not interested in these men, and her tutor Putana, played brilliantly by Bridget Rue (nice costume) encourages her to pursue the relationship. They consummate their relationship and Annabella becomes pregnant. She later marries Soranzo at the urging of Friar Bonaventura following the murder of Bergetto by Grimaldi and after he discovers she is pregnant with her brother's child. Following this the play descends into a series of twists and brutalities that are too complex to detail here.

Other outstanding performances are turned in by Eugene Douglas as Vasques, a servant of Soranzo who has traces of Iago to him; Daniel Abraham Stevens as Florio, the father of Giovanni and Annabella, and Stephanie Holladay Earl as Hippolita. Again, Erin West deserves a big shout out for the costumes in this production.

This play is considered one of the most controversial in the history of the English

### About Me



**Adrian**

Mid-Atlantic Traveler reviews the people, places, events, and foodways of the Shenandoah, Cumberland, and Susquehanna Valleys.

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language. After seeing it and reading it, I would agree. Basically, the feeling I was left with was one of shock. This is a must see production. One rarely gets to see something this shocking or controversial, particularly from a mainstream theatre company. If the tour is performing this anywhere near you, go see it and then check it out again when it returns to Staunton. It will blow you away.

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at 7:44 AM

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 **Denice** said...

Agreed! Erin West is an incredible designer!!!

December 5, 2011 at 9:06 AM

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