



The Comedy of Errors

Great Comedy in a Pinch

[American Shakespeare Center](#), Blackfriars Playhouse, Staunton, Va.
Saturday, April 25, 2009
Directed by Giles Block

A few memories occupy the upper sphere of our Shakespeareances: joining them just minutes ago, Pinch at the Blackfriars.

Daniel Kennedy had already put the audience in stitches with Dr. Pinch's predictions in the preshow. But those stitches broke into tear-inducing laughter during the play as he disrobed to reveal an oversized purple diaper and, on a one-two-three with his tabor-playing assistant, erupted into an all-knees-and-elbows exorcism dance next to an Antipholus as bemused as Bugs Bunny watching the Tasmanian Devil. Not once but twice did Pinch go into his dance. Our tears returned again when that same Antipholus repeated the dance for the astonished Duke—a Duke played by the very same Daniel Kennedy. How funny was this? This troupe had been touring *Comedy of Errors* around the nation for some six months, and yet Kelley McKinnon as the Courtesan seemed to be stifling her laughter at Kennedy's performance.

Up to that moment, this *Comedy* was somewhat slow-paced. It dwelled on the puns—always dangerous—and while these actors were mostly able to convey the puns to the audience, the plot seemed to bog. **It played up the violence, uncomfortably so. It played up drunken behavior, which slowed the show and made the already improbable plot more improbable.** The action picked up considerably with the arrest sequence, and that quickening pace was made more notable by Jonathan Reis as the Officer ever-scribbling in his report book trying to keep up.

This production did achieve something only one other has (that of the University of Missouri): Dromios so much alike (Rick Blunt and Dennis Henry) that they truly confused the audience as much as the characters on stage. And when Kelley McKinnon's Abbess revealed herself as Emilia, it was a true tear-inducing moment of the melodramatic kind, even amid the mayhem. Josh Carpenter played a cock-sure-turned-incredulous Antipholus of Syracuse, and Luke Eddy played a cocky-turned-confused Antipholus of Ephesus. Brandi Rhome's Luciana was noticeably conflicted by the advances of Antipholus of Syracuse, and Ginna Hoben was a shrill Adriana—almost too shrill, her voice searing through eardrums when she demanded her husband of the Abbess.

Eric Minton
April 25, 2009

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WILL POWER ON STAGE

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