

Ease of Ready Hands: Junior Players' ***THE TAMING OF THE SHREW***

July 29, 2016

The Taming of the Shrew, directed by Anastasia Munoz

Li'l Abner dukes it out with Sex in the City...guess who wins? Love and the audience do as Junior Players presents another raucous romp for its yearly Samuell-Grand Park Amphitheatre offering through July 31, a cleverly modernized Shakespearean antidote to Dallas' summer heat wave.

Former Junior Players' actor Anastasia Munoz, who has worked for JP as choreographer, assistant director and stage manager for the past nine years,

makes her JP directorial debut, with Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew.

Inspiring an engaging, fast-paced but thoughtful performance from her cast of 23 regional high school actors, Munoz brought back 2016 Seagoville High School graduate Adam Rodriguez and 2016 Ursuline Academy graduate Eliza Palter from JP's rousing 2015 A Midsummer Night's Dream (Lysander and Helena) to portray this year's leads Petruchio and Katherine. A well-matched pair in every aspect, indeed.



Palter's Kate establishes herself immediately as a quick-witted, intelligent young lady of depth ensnared in a NYC billionaire father's socialite purgatory, where her only recreations are torturing her younger, vapid sister Bianca (petite Nicole Cisneros playing superficial and giddy to the Kardashian-influenced max) and scaring the daylights out of Bianca's preening, bumbling, parasitic suitors. Enter eccentric Nebraska farm boy, Petruchio, replete with flannel shirt, jeans, baseball cap, laconic swagger and country twang, who has "come to wife it wealthily in NYC" and sets his "cap" for the bored, frustrated, overbearing Kate. Rodriguez



creates a Petruchio grounded in reality, a contrast to the superficial opulence he finds Kate lost in. Projection upstage right of an oversized Facebook screen chat adds a relevant facet to the rollicking romance, and that's where Rodriguez's Petruchio "sees through" Kate's façade to the honest, lonely girl lurking behind. Unflappable, Rodriguez strolls through Petruchio's blustering, overblown speeches with

impeccable calm and enviable clarity for a recent high school grad. He strips Kate of all pretension, recognizing her kindred spirit within. It's a simple, sophisticated approach to the role and works very well to drive the play towards peaceful resolution even with Kate's "problem" monologue at the end, a frequent source of interpretative consternation for scholars and practitioners, alike. Director Munoz keeps the horseplay light but visually pleasing (romantic pop tunes bookend scenes). While some of the younger actors in secondary roles are challenged with speaking Shakespearean language, this Junior Players' production presents a worthy evening of The Bard, sure to please an astute audience's palate. It provides a marvelous summer learning experience for all the young thespians involved. A total class act. Other performances of special note include Singley Academy graduate Alejo Ibarra as Kate and Bianca's overwrought magnate father Baptista and elegant, slim Irving High School graduate Nicholas Wanjohi as Bianca's dedicated suitor Lucentio. Kudos to the Social Media Strategist Kris Trejo and Projection Designer Alison Sloan. Congratulations to Anastasia Munoz on her JP directorial debut with this fun, thought-provoking, memorable production.

The Taming of the Shrew plays July 29-31 at 8:15pm at Samuell-Grand Park Amphitheatre, a Junior Players production in collaboration with Shakespeare Dallas.

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