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At Cafe Messina: It's Much Ado about Everything

by Melissa Cruz

Last Saturday I braved the strangest of weather, scattered torrential downpours and winds that almost unwillingly blew me across Bleecker Street. All this in order to check out Wide Eyed Productions latest feat, an updated version of William Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing."

Now "updated" versions of Shakespeare can get tricky and I'll be honest in saying that when I saw the play was to be set in Williamsburg I let out a bit of a groan. Can the hipsters of Williamsburg get over themselves and their quaint little Brooklyn town for about five minutes? I mean really! However, little did I know that this production was in the masterful hands of director Kristen Skye Hoffman. Hoffman hits every necessary mark with this new, exciting and joyful production of one of Shakespeare's great comedies.

The production is cast perfectly with a gaggle of energetic and very talented young actors.

There are stand out performances from the dreamy Brian Floyd as an enticing Benedick, Scott Voloshin's creepy villain Don John is perfectly crafted with a less-is-more comedic approach and Anthony Reimer gives a powerful yet tender performance as the loveable Leonato.

The rest of the company is equally gifted.

Hoffman made her first perfect directing choice by casting her show exquisitely. She makes her second great choice by utilizing her cast members to their fullest. The members of the Night Watch, whom we normally do not see until the second act, appear in the first act as patrons of the hip coffee house Café Messina.

They are given ample opportunity to shine in a

few comedic asides. This is a fun and very smart move by our director.



As a self-proclaimed Bard fanatic, I was very happy to see such a refreshing take on such a beloved play.

Hoffman has found the broad humor, sensuality and drama in Shakespeare's work. All too often Shakespeare is mistaken as stuffy resulting in boring renditions of his plays. Many of which I have suffered through. For me, he has always represented some of the greatest female characters ever written like the

feisty Beatrice (played here with gusty strength by Lea McKenna-Garcia). His work also has a joy, passion, humor and sexiness that Hoffman and her cast have honed in on with gusto. The result is a exhilaratingly hilarious night of theater.

Wide Eyed Production of "Much Ado About Nothing" will be at the Gene Frankel Underground Theatre for only one more week! Don't miss it!

Tickets Available at: www.theatermania.com