

Production Notice

Utah Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* Offers Rowdy, Bawdy Shenanigans

by Jim Volz. Published in 2018 Issue 1.

For the production: *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2018, Utah Shakespeare Festival). Performance attended: 2018-08-15, 8 pm. See production details at the end of the review.



Figure 1. Photo by Karl Hugh. Copyright Utah Shakespeare Festival 2018.

Liars, lechers, and lovers are centerstage in the Utah Shakespeare's bawdy *Merry Wives of Windsor* farce, where women are pursued for their potential purses and the men are mostly fools and laughable pawns. Director Paul Mason Barnes sweetens the silliness by adding musical introductions to the characters, the village of Windsor, and the otherwise tawdry trope of John Falstaff's attempted seduction of Mistress Alice Ford and Mistress Margaret Page. To the surprise

and confusion of their clueless husbands, the two wives conspire to foil the arrogant, cowardly John Falstaff and much merriment ensues.

Tarah Flanagan (Mistress Ford) and Stephanie Lambourn (Mistress Page) are amusing as the plotting, playfully revenge-minded merry wives and John Ahlin is one of the more believable and agile Falstaffs in recent memory. Although some of the clownish stretching-for-the floor bits wore thin quickly, his ability to swoop to clear props off the stage when called on was downright miraculous. Still, it's a solid performance and he carries off the basket scene, ridiculous flirtatiousness, and general bravado with aplomb.



Figure 2. Stephanie Lambourn (left) as Mistress Margaret Page, John Ahlin as Sir John Falstaff, and Tarah Flanagan as Mistress Alice Ford. Photo by Karl Hugh. Copyright Utah Shakespeare Festival 2018.

Geoffrey Kent as Frank Ford is dandy as the potentially cuckolded husband and Henry A. McDaniel is spot on as George Page, the more trusting and sensible of the two husbands. Director Paul Mason Barnes makes wonderful use of the singing and swaying supporting cast that includes a charming Anne Page (Cailen Fu), a spirited and dashing Fenton (Ty Fanning), a feisty Mistress Quickly (Leslie Brott), and an eccentric and droll Dr. Caius (Michael Elich).

On the design side, Apollo Mark Weaver capably frames the indoor/outdoor action of the play scenically, right down to the flower boxes that line the downstage edge of the stage (and helped

soak up the nightly rainstorm in the outdoor Engelstad Shakespeare Theatre). Bill Black's colorful costumes enriched the director's musical, community celebration vision of the production, as did the collective creative collaborations of the sound designer (Barry Funderburg) and music director (Brandon Scott Grayson).

Onstage and backstage, it's a strong ensemble effort, and the overall company contributes mightily to this "Shakespeare-plus" musical theatre production of one of the Bard's most produced comedies in one of America's most delightful Shakespeare Festivals.

Production Details

General

<i>Title</i>	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
<i>Year</i>	2018
<i>Theater Company</i>	Utah Shakespeare Festival
<i>Theater</i>	Engelstad Shakespeare Theatre
<i>Start Date</i>	2018-06-28
<i>End Date</i>	2018-09-08

Cast

ROBERT SHALLOW, A COUNTRY JUSTICE	DAN KREMER
ABRAHAM SLENDER, NEPHEW OF SHALLOW	LANCE RASMUSSEN
SIR HUGH EVANS, A WELSH PARSON	MICHAEL A. HARDING
GEORGE PAGE, GENTLEMAN OF WINDSOR	HENRY A. MCDANIEL
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF	JOHN AHLIN
PISTOL, A FOLLOWER OF FALSTAFF	JOSH INNERST
NYM, A FOLLOWER OF FALSTAFF	KYLE BULLOCK
MISTRESS ANNE PAGE, DAUGHTER OF GEORGE AND MARGARET PAGE	CAILEN FU
MISTRESS ALICE FORD	TARAH FLANAGAN
MISTRESS MARGARET PAGE	STEPHANIE LAMBOURN
PETER SIMPLE, SERVANT OF SLENDER	AUSTIN GLEN JACOBS
HOST OF THE GARTER INN	JIM POULOS
ROBIN, PAGE OF FALSTAFF	SARA FUNK
JOHN RUGBY, SERVANT OF DOCTOR CAIUS	LONDON TATE BOYLE
MISTRESS QUICKLY, SERVANT OF DOCTOR CAIUS	LESLIE BROTT
DOCTOR CAIUS, A FRENCH PHYSICIAN	MICHAEL ELICH
FENTON, A GENTLEMAN	TY FANNING
FRANCIS “FRANK” FORD, GENTLEMAN OF WINDSOR	GEOFFREY KENT
ROBERT, SERVANT OF THE FORDS	JOSH INNERST
JOHN, SERVANT OF THE FORDS	KYLE BULLOCK
WILLIAM PAGE, THE PAGES’ SON	ANDREW BRANDON BARRICK
SILVIUS, SCHOOL CHUM	MILES L. SAVAGE
HARRY, SCHOOL CHUM	JARED SOWARDS
AUDREY, SCHOOL CHUM	KATE SOWARDS
CELIA, SCHOOL CHUM	HALLE VICKERS

Creatives

DIRECTOR

SCENIC DESIGNER

COSTUME DESIGNER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

SOUND DESIGNER

MUSIC DIRECTOR

DRAMATURG

VOICE AND TEXT COACH

FIGHT DIRECTOR

STAGE MANAGER

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

PAUL MASON BARNES

APOLLO MARK WEAVER

BILL BLACK

MICHAEL PASQUINI

BARRY G. FUNDERBURG

BRANDON SCOTT GRAYSON

ISABEL SMITH-BERNSTEIN

JEREMY SORTORE

GEOFFREY KENT

TERENCE ORLEANS ALEXANDER

CALEB THOMAS COOK