

SHOW BUSINESS

The Original Casting Weekly for the Performing Arts

The Triumph of Love

Written by Pierre Marivaux

Directed by Stephen Burdman

Runs through August 24, 2003

Review by Raneer Jaber



For the past three years New York Classical Theatre has been making classical theater accessible to a larger and more diverse audience. Using Central Park as their stage, the group has made theatergoing a more interactive experience, allowing audience members to mingle with actors in a way that traditional venues would not allow.

This year, director Stephen Burdman brings the romantic comedy, *The Triumph of Love* by Pierre Marivaux to New York. Writing in 18th century France, Marivaux became popular for his brand of romantic comedy. Light-hearted by nature, the term *marivaudage* was coined to describe his shows as well as the flirtatious and airy nature of his characters.

The story follows a young princess named Leonide (Jenn Schulte), who while strolling in the woods encounters a handsome young man named Agis (Shad Ramsey), with whom she is immediately smitten. Things are complicated however, when she learns that he is the rightful heir to the throne and has thus been raised his entire life to despise her very existence.

The production is an absolute delight. Each scene is held in a different section of the park. As the audience moves with the actors, the story has the illusion of unfolding right before their eyes. With the open air and space as a backdrop, the division between actor and audience is skewed and there is a true sense of excitement in experiencing the play.

This feeling is only topped by the performances. Jenn Schulte seems to really capture the charm and wit of lead character Leonide, and she does an excellent job of convincing not only her counterparts, but the audience of her many gifts and charms. Margaret Reed, as Leontine, is wonderful to watch as her character changes from a repressed and uptight personality to a wave of passionate emotion completely awash in love.

But perhaps what is most important and successful is the dynamic created by every actor. There is a sense that they are really enjoying themselves while performing. Furthermore, their timing and interaction is very precise, even while the plot twists and turns into a bizarre triangle of guilt and deceit—it's something that is crucial and often very difficult to execute in a play of this nature.

All in all, *The Triumph of Love* is a great way to spend an evening in the park and a great way to reacquaint yourself with a classic piece of theater. And since it's free, don't forget to make a donation.