

ORLANDO

By Sarah Ruhl



13th

~~12th~~ - **16th Nov 2024**

West Bridgford Dramatic Society

The Studio Theatre, Stamford Rd, NG2 6LS

WBDS.co.uk



Chair's Welcome - Lynn Burges

A very warm welcome to The Studio Theatre and our first production of the season, *Orlando*. An enormous amount of hard work has gone into bringing this play to life and I hope that you have an enjoyable evening.

If you do, please tell family and friends where we are and what we do. This programme contains details of the remaining productions of the season including our February offering, the classic *Dial M for Murder*.

In addition to performing four plays a year, we are always looking at ways to improve the theatre experience for our members and patrons. We are in the middle of a rolling programme to update our lighting system, the kitchen will be getting a facelift this year and you may have noticed the solar panels on the roof, making our energy consumption more efficient. The committee is currently looking at a variety of ways to improve our carpark. These projects are funded from the profit we make on ticket sales and the sale of consumables, so enjoy a glass of wine or an ice cream in the interval and you will be helping in a small way!

If you are interested in joining our merry band, or have suggestions for improvements, or feedback on something we are doing well, please let our Front of House team know on your way out. All that is left for me to say is "I hope you enjoy *Orlando* and don't forget to switch your phone off!"



Director's Notes - Barbara Seymour

Our quirky and smiley play tells the story of Orlando, a 16th century young nobleman whose life spans over the centuries until the present day.

He continually strives to write a great poem, but words fail him. He is taken to court by Queen Elizabeth I, falls in love with a Russian princess, is pursued by men and women who are infatuated with him, causing him to escape to Constantinople. There he holds a great party and wakes from his hangover to discover that he has become a woman.

Returning to England she discovers that Georgian legislation prevents her from inheriting her ancestral home, she now reflects bitterly on differing expectations of women in contrast to those of men.

Having experienced passion and adventure, Orlando finally meets Shelmerdine who becomes her husband, despite her resistance to bow to society's pressure to find a spouse. They establish a caring, calm and equal relationship which leads Orlando once again to pick up her pen and attempt to write.

Playwright Sarah Ruhl has adapted Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, often hailed as the longest love letter ever penned. Woolf dedicated this literary masterpiece to Vita Sackville-West, her long-term friend and former lover. Vita, the inspiration for the novel's eponymous character, was married to Harold Nicolson, who is represented by Shelmerdine in the narrative. Together, Vita and Harold created the renowned gardens at Sissinghurst, their beloved family home.

Geeks like me will recognise many of the characters in the play as members of the Bloomsbury Set, but those who are not afflicted by this particular obsession will enjoy the play just as much!

Sarah Ruhl has mirrored the themes of the novel brilliantly and they are as contemporary as ever, covering gender identity, equality and human endeavours to lead a fulfilled and contented life. She advises that the style of production might draw on the theatre arts of Vietnam. We feel a fair match is the British style of panto, coupled with the familiar bunch of strolling players, going from village to village, which is found in all cultures.

We have had amazing fun with this production. Telling a story with a cast of five, depicting numerous characters over hundreds of years has stretched both the actors and the production team – we present it to you now in the hope that you will find it as smiley and as insightful as we do.

Team Orlando



Set Design Notes - Ali Bakewell

The set - two pieces of rostra, two flats standing together and a tree - is simultaneously simple and complex. It is nowhere and everywhere, of no time and every time. It is Orlando.

The London skyline portrayed on the walls is inspired by the numerous impressionist paintings by Monet on the subject. It is chronologically accurate but not geographically correct. It reflects the journey through time taken by Orlando from the sixteenth century to present day. How many landmarks can you spot?

The River Thames is ever-present in the play and runs from left to right as you look at the stage. The flotsam and jetsam of life can be seen swirling round the set on the floor.



The oak tree, the most English of all trees, that provided timber for Elizabeth's warships and was intricately carved by Chippendale for Georgian aristocracy is also a constant throughout the story. Orlando seeks inspiration under its canopy. It's not an accident that the leaves have all fallen and the tree appears barren.

Between 1899 and 1901, Monet, a passionate painter of beauty, came to London to experiment with ugliness. His paintings radiate colour caused by the sun's refraction in polluted air.

Monet's 21 pictures of the River Thames are currently collected together for the first time since 1904 at the Courtauld Gallery, London, until 19th January 2025.

Time Out's art editor Eddy Frankel comments on Monet's picture of the Thames: "He saw in the fog of London, a swirling miasma of psychedelic light. The play of sun and fog and smog created fields of orange and pink and grey and blue that smothered the bridges and choked the Houses of Parliament in a heavy blanket of pure colour."

He saw beauty where others saw ugliness, and so, the rainbow colours on the set reflect the non-binary nature of many of the characters on the stage.

Cast

Emily Martin - Orlando

Chorus and other roles

Lynn Burges - Queen

Sav Dixon - Sasha

Kristina Russell - Duke/Duchess

Calum Sharp - Shelmerdine

The action takes place over the past 500 years in London and Constantinople.

There is one interval of 20 minutes when drinks and ice cream will be available.

Please remember to switch off mobile phones during the performance - even a screen can be distracting to cast and other members of the audience.

Thanks to Alison Willcox at New Perspectives Theatre Co. for the loan of the tank trap for the base of the tree and weights.

Creative Team

Director	Barbara Seymour
Production Manager	Rosie Farrow
Stage Manager	Rob Dixon
Assistant Stage Manager	Jo Sharpe
Set Designer	Ali Bakewell
Set Landscape Artist	Annie Haley
Set Construction Team	Andy Bakewell, Ritchie Sharpe & Society members
Props/Costume Team	Jo Sharpe, Carol O'Connor & Charlie Wilcox
Lighting Design	Whole creative team
Lighting Operator	Alex Wardle
Soundscape & Audience Music	Arran Mackay
Play Music	Barbara Seymour
Sound Operator	Ritchie Sharpe
Choreographer	Jenny Matthews
Poster Designer	Annie Haley
Front of House Manager	Caroline Todd
Box Office Manager	Calum Sharp
FOH Staff	Society members

The Cast



Emily Martin

I have been a member of WBDS for two years. This is my fourth production and second play by Sarah Ruhl (*Eurydice 2023*) that I have been a part of with the society. I have loved playing Orlando alongside such an amazing director and cast!



Lynn Burges

This is my 12th year as a member of WBDS and third stint as Chair. I have no idea how many plays I have acted in but while I continue having this much fun, hopefully it won't be my last. I've enjoyed the opportunity to play a Queen, Russian sailor, shop assistant, and housemaid, all in the space of a couple of hours.



Sav Dixon

I joined WBDS when I was 17 and immediately started backstage, then made my on stage debut in *Dear Lily* in 2018. This is my first play I've been involved in since finishing at university and I'm so excited to be back with WBDS and acting on stage!



Kristina Russell

I have been a member of WBDS since 2014 and have been lucky to have played many varied roles since then. My most recent productions include *A Bunch of Amateurs* and *Death by Design*. Having worked before with Barbara, the director, on *Pyramus and Thisbe*, I was keen to be involved in this play as I enjoy the creativity and freedom you experience working with her. The opportunity to play multiple parts is every actor's dream and I am looking forward to help bring this great play to life.



Calum Sharp

I have been with WBDS for four and a half years, and this is my second time being directed by Barbara after *Mother Courage* in 2022. Performing in one of Barbara's productions usually allows you to exercise both your comedy and drama chops. This time is no different.

Our next production...



Tickets are available from www.wbds.co.uk

...followed by

6th -10th May. *Communicating Doors* by Alan Ayckbourn.
An intricate, time travelling comic thriller.

10th -13th July. *The Signalman* by Matthew Harper will be
paired with Sheila Hodgson's *Tunnel Vision*.

www.wbds.co.uk

Join us!

Do you love the thrill of a live performance? West Bridgford Dramatic Society is the perfect place for you!

We're a friendly bunch who share a passion for theatre. Whether you're an experienced actor, a behind-the-scenes whiz, or just looking for a fun new hobby, we've got a place for you.

Come along to our club night at The Studio Theatre on Stamford Road on Tuesdays and see what we're all about. We've got a great mix of play readings, workshops, and social events. And who knows, you might just discover a hidden talent you never knew you had!

We would like to thank Rushcliffe Borough Council for giving us a grant from the UK Government-backed Shared Prosperity Fund. This money has helped us buy solar panels, making our energy use and carbon footprint much smaller. We're already seeing the difference in our energy bills!
