

Romeo and Juliet good, but not flawless

by Jason DeCristofaro
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On Thursday Nov. 20, the first of three performances of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," was staged by the Brevard College Theatre Department.

Any work by Shakespeare is difficult to pull off, and can come across as dry and stilted old prose in the hands of amateurs. In the hands of professionals who have carefully observed the dry wit and romantic content of many of his works, though, Shakespeare becomes a living, breathing animal that has no compare on the stage. The BC Theatre Department fulfilled their duties as thespians in bringing this to fruition on Thursday night.

Several talented actors graced the stage and made the performance exceptionally enjoyable. Alicia Elias' performance as Mercutio was worth noting. Her understanding of her character as comic relief for the otherwise dark setting evoked uproarious laughter from the audience as she hammed up several witty lines with a dark but inviting sense of humor and tasteful sarcasm.

Another pivotal character in the play that provides comic relief is Juliet's nurse, who was played with powerful conviction by Katherine Parnell. The role of the nurse is a complex one, since she has to express such a wide gamut of emotions, ranging from scenes of jovial comedic content to ones of extreme sadness and despair. Parnell did a phenomenal job in bringing life into her character in this regard, and was also a scene stealer that frequently brought down the house with immense laughter and applause.

Kelly Bone's performance as Juliet was also nothing short of exceptional. In the case of Juliet, the actor has to work hard to make sure the character doesn't come across as a helpless female. Kelly Bone's infusion of comedy, joviality, emotional intensity, and dark wit made Juliet an extremely interesting character that the audience could really connect with and understand. Bone did an especially great job during her final monologue, when Juliet

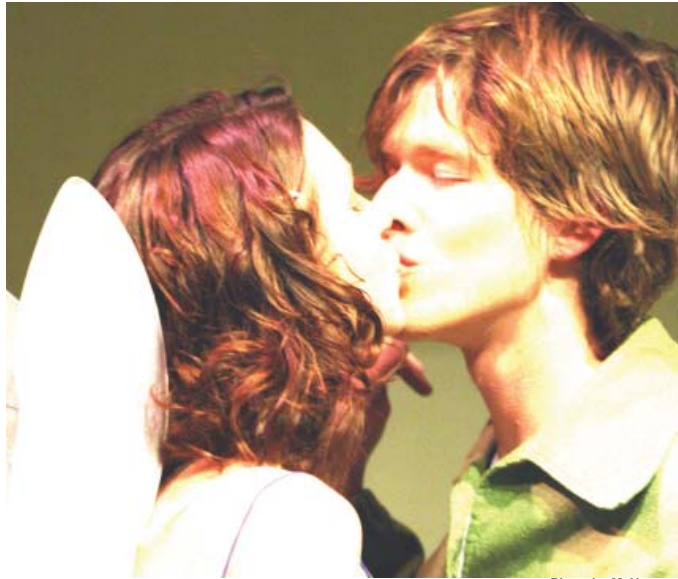


Photo by M. Newton

stabs herself.

Another actor that did an exceptional job was Dwight Chiles, who played the role of the Friar Lawrence. Dwight proved to be a master at performing monologues, and brought Shakespeare's text to life with his subtle pauses and calm but powerful voice. His ability to dominate the stage and captivate the audience's attention as both a solo performer presenting monologues and in dialogue with several other actors was superb.

The production crew, for the most part, did a marvelous job as well. The conservative yet stylish costumes created by Dorothea Berry and Kara Ontiveros did an excellent job of establishing the social delineation between different characters. Kelly Tysinger's stage management was excellent, as the position of the actors on the stage seemed simultaneously natural and larger than life, as it should be in good theatre.

This is not to say that the play didn't have its flaws, which, while few and far between, were enough to have a significant impact on the performance. Some of the actors could have done a better job of enunciating important lines. There were often points where characters who had the privilege of saying some of the greatest poetry ever written for the actor cast them aside, rushing through the juiciest and most

important lines.

The largest flaw of the play, was the sound design. Strangely enough, director Michael MacCauley lauded the sound designer's job prior to the performance. If anything, I found everything the sound designer did to be extremely distasteful and distracting. The famous courtyard dialogue between Romeo and Juliet was violated with cheesy romantic music. In the final act, when Juliet stabs herself upon thinking Romeo has committed a similar action, the audience is treated to something akin to a horror or "X-Files" soundtrack. Kelly Bone's emotionally wrought and powerful performance in this scene was marred by the annoyance of what sounded like the score to a slasher movie.

For the most part, however, the BC Theatre Department did a magnificent job of putting on what is certainly one of the hardest plays in the stage repertoire. Too often students complain about the lack of things to do on campus, so it was pleasing to see so many students filling the seats of the Black Box Theatre Thursday night. The Brevard College Theatre Department has had an extremely successful semester, between their sublime performance of "Two Rooms" (which was performed with the same pedigree as any professional theatre group), and their staging of the classic "Romeo and Juliet."