

Out and About: An entertaining night at the local theater

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Love, intrigue, comedy, talent! It's all about planning and strategy, or so it seems in Mountain Community Theater's latest production, "The Beaux' Stratagem," an adaptation of British playwright George Farquhar's Restoration comedy written in 1707. Thornton Wilder began this delightful, updated adaptation in the 1930's which, at the request of his estate, was completed by Ken Ludwig in 2004.

Times change, but the human need to find love—preferably with financial security—doesn't. Hence the quest by Jack Archer, played by Nat Robinson, and his sidekick Tom Aimwell, played by Nik Beiden, for a suitable, wealthy woman to marry so they can share her estate and restore their flagrantly wasted funds.

Thus begins the shenanigans and intrigue brilliantly performed by this madcap hoot-and-holler cast at Park Hall in Ben Lomond. The entire playhouse becomes a stage as actors gallop, careen and leap on and off the stage, disappearing and reappearing until the audience is as breathless as the cast from the expended energy and perfect comedic timing. Credit must be given to the director, W. Scott Whisler, for letting the cast play while reining them in just enough so the audience can follow the storyline.

The innkeeper, Boniface (Scott Kravitz) and his comely daughter Cherry (Alie Macbird), along with a charming Dorinda (Cassandra Stipes) add to the confusion, with flirtation, foiled robbery, and love interest all leading towards one goal: love.

Mrs. Kate Sullen (Shireen Doyle) is the reluctant wife of Sullen (Marty Lee Jones), who is the besotted son of Lady Bountiful (Hannah Eckstein). These three actors use timing, facial expression, volume, physicality and every other known acting convention to assure that the audience gets the jokes and doesn't dare fall asleep. The constant buffoonery when they are on stage is alone worth the price of the ticket.

Even the servants (Julian Espinoza, Delle Townsend, Austin Whisler and Elise Whisler) manage to steal their own piece of the show by undermining one another as they change sets, dust, imbibe and argue revealing all too human, and all too amusing, traits.

Whisler directed this must-see play with the goal of presenting "...A wise play, disguised as a new play in an old play's clothing, about how we are better off because we disguise ourselves so poorly." Something to think about.



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Courtesy of Mountain Community Theater

Ariel and Matt Young of Ben Lomond are MCT season ticket holders who saw the play Valentine's night. She said MCT offers, "...high caliber community theater" and well-chosen plays. Two younger audience members, Lucas Doyle, age 10, and sister Lauren, 7, were there, accompanied by grandpa and grandma—Ross and Sheri Norbosh—to cheer on their mom with roses and hugs. Lucas plans, like his mother, to pursue thespian endeavors, and Lauren won't be far behind.

The play is suitable for all ages, as much of the double entendre humor will be missed by anyone under ten. A brief intermission allowed people to enjoy fruit, cookies, wine, coffee, and sodas in a friendly atmosphere. Neighbors chatting with neighbors, looking forward to MCTs 2014 season—this is just what a community theater should be.

“The Beaux's Stratagem” opened at Ben Lomond's Park Hall, 9400 Mill Street in Ben Lomond on Friday, Feb. 14, and continues through Sunday, March 2. Thursday, Friday and Saturday performances are at 8 p.m. Sunday matinees are at 2 p.m. General Admission tickets are \$20. Students and seniors are \$17. All tickets for the Thursday performance on February 27 are \$10.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.mctshows.org or www.brownpapertickets.com

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