

A CurtainUp Los Angeles Review

As U2 Like It

By [Laura Hitchcock](#)

She makes me want to punch a baby!— Orlando of Rosalind

Because I usually take my Shakespeare straight, I haven't seen any of the increasingly acclaimed Troubadour Theater Company's deconstructions geared to the gimmick of setting each to the music of an individual pop artist or group. I passed on *Much Adoobie Brothers About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *The Artist Formerly Known as Prince of Denmark* and *Othello* But the lure of *As U2 Like It*, featuring the music of Bono's Dublin group U2, melted my Irish-American heart and I journeyed to the valley to Garry Marshall's Falcon Theatre. I was rewarded with one of the deftest, funniest and most imaginative productions lighting up the Los Angeles scene.

Touchstone, the court fool, is the ringmaster and keystone of this production. He's played by Matt Walker, who also directs and founded the company. A former circus performer, Walker combines formidable gifts of mime and clowning with staging skills and an adaptation that combines Shakespeare with raunchy topical allusions, such as the line quoted above.

Where else would you see Charles, the wrestler who gets into it with the hero Orlando, played by professional stiltwalker Dan Waskom, who kicks his opponent and twirls so gracefully you'd swear there was another pair of real legs under his long pants? That's only the first of many delights and surprises, including acrobatics, mime and such wonderful sight gags as a lover pulling out a string of red paper-doll hearts from his breast.

It's all interspersed with U2 songs with the lyrics altered to fit what's happening and aided by the powerful belting of Breanna Pine as Rosalind and Katie Nunez as Celia. Matt Merchant as Orlando shouts more than he sings but he's everybody's idea of a hero and knows how to make fun of himself.

One pure moment is The Seven Ages of Man speech mimed and delivered by Beth Kennedy as Jacques with wry simplicity. Kennedy wears whiteface and a black costume suggestive of Harlequin that reinforces her interpretation.

A live band headed by Eric Heinly provides lively accompaniment in a summerhouse set in the middle of the forest of Arden. The colorful set and costumes, like the production, blend the traditional with the wacky interpret Walker's concept perfectly. I hope U2 appreciates this production as much as Shakespeare would have.

AS U2 LIKE IT

Playwright: Adapted from William Shakespeare's play by the Troubadour Theater Company

Director: Matt Walker

Cast: Rick Batalla (Oliver), Travis Clark (Dennis, a servant), Beth Kennedy (Jacques), Audrey Siegel (Phoebe), Matt Merchant (Orlando), Matthew Morgan (Silvius), Katie Nunez (Celia), Breanna Pine (Rosalind), Mike Suprizio (Duke Frederick and Duke Senior), Matt Walker (Touchstone), Dan Waskim (Charles), Kimberly Wood (Katherine).

Band: Musical Director/Drums (Eric Heinly), Bass (Thomas Dryaton), Keyboards (Mitchell Sigman), Guitar (Pocket Honore)
Set Design: Sherry Santillano
Lighting Design: Nick McCord
Costume Design: Sharon McGunigle
Choreography: Christine Lakin
Sound Design: Robert Arturo Ramirez
Stage Manager: Corey Womack
Running Time: Two hours with one intermission
Running Dates: August 22-October 12, 2008
Where: The Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Drive, Burbank. Reservations: (818) 955-8101.
Reviewed by Laura Hitchcock on August 30, 2008.