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As U2 Like It

(Falcon Theater; 130 seats; \$40 top) A Falcon Theater presentation of a musical in two acts by the Troubadour Theater Company. Directed by Matt Walker.

Oliver - Rick Batalla
Dennis - Travis Clark
Jaques - Beth Kennedy
Phebe - Audrey Siegel
Orlando - Matt Merchant
Silvius - Matthew Morgan
Celia - Katie Nunez
Rosalind - Breanna Pine
Duke Frederick/
Duke Senior - Mike Sulprizio
Touchstone - Matt Walker
Charles - Dan Waskom
Katherine - Kimberly Wood
Swings - Andy Lopez,
Monica Schneider

By [VARIETY STAFF](#)

The estimable Troubadour Theater Company is renowned for its mixture of anarchic clowning and musical theater, often combining a Shakespeare play with the music from a popular artist, with productions such as "Fleetwood Macbeth" or "Much ADoobie Brothers About Nothing." The Troubies' latest production, "As U2 Like It," continues their artistic winning streak, succeeding in conveying the gist of the Shakespeare source material amid a constant flurry of songs, quips and physical comedy in a highly entertaining show.

The structure of "As You Like It" remains in this version. Bad Duke Frederick (Mike Sulprizio) banishes a load of people who end up in the Forest of Arden. Orlando (Matt Merchant) longs

for the love of Rosalind (Breanna Pine), who just happens to be there herself in disguise as a man. The once-evil Oliver (Rick Batalla) becomes a better man in the wilderness and falls for Frederick's daughter, Celia (Katie Nunez). Shepherd Silvius (Matthew Morgan) pursues the callous Phebe (Audrey Siegel), and Jaques (Beth Kennedy) remains immovably solemn.

Merchant is appropriately heroic as Orlando, but he is also charmingly goofy in his pursuit of Rosalind. Pine largely plays her role straight, and she does such a fine job that when she steps out of Shakespeare with a joke it's that much more striking due to the contrasting styles. Batalla is very funny in a couple of roles, and he gets maximum value from a series of groan-worthy staff jokes. Nunez is good if a bit underutilized as Celia, but she demonstrates a strong voice in the duet of "With Or Without You" with Batalla.

Siegel steals the show as the bullying Phebe, making the most of her clownish costume and frightwig, owning the stage when she's on it. Her perf of "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" and concurrent dance is hilarious. Morgan has a challenge matching Siegel, but he's up to it, lasciviously licking her toes and eating popcorn from the stage floor in an amusing excess of amorous enthusiasm. Kennedy is superb as Jaques, a melancholy shadow amid the revels, and her perf of the "Ages of Man" speech is extraordinary, combining humor and skill in such a way that the audience is simply mesmerized -- it's a "wow" moment if ever there was one.

Director Matt Walker keeps the energy high and the laughs consistent, and he is a welcome presence onstage as the court fool Touchstone. There is no credited writer for the show, yet mention must still be made of the cleverness of many of the altered U2 song lyrics and the brilliance of the scene in which it's pointed out that many U2 songs sound the same, whereupon multiple song stanzas are sung simultaneously to the same backup tune to prove the point.

Sherry Santillano's Arden set is effective and impressive, Nick McCord's lighting provides extra visual excitement in the musical numbers, and Sharon McGunigle's costumes seem high quality and well conceived. Eric Heinly's musical direction is efficient, with a professional house band, and Christine Lakin's choreography is lively and inventive.

Sets, Sherry Santillano; costumes, Sharon McGunigle; lighting, Nick McCord; sound, Robert Arturo Ramirez; musical direction, Eric Heinly; choreography, Christine Lakin; production stage manager, Corey Womack. Opened, reviewed Aug. 22, 2008; runs through Oct. 12. Running time: 2 HOURS, 5 MIN.

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