



Review: The Boys from Syracuse

Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate

By Jessica Holt

I knew I was in for an enjoyable and fun evening just by looking at the set for Rodgers and Hart's *The Boys from Syracuse*, a mosaic backdrop with lots of witty comments and cartoonish images. The opening number *I Had Twins* introduced the whole cast, setting the mood with eccentric, colourful costumes, simple but effective movement and choreography and lots of smiles.

This musical based on Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* works well in the Gatehouse's small space enabling the audience to connect closely with the ridiculous plot and characters. The quality of the singing by the cast and music played by a small band was very high.

The standout numbers in this musical are *Falling in Love* and *This Can't Be Love*, both sung beautifully, and although the other songs are not so memorable they blend in well with the narrative and contribute a great deal to the comical nature of this musical.

The twins Antipholus of Ephesus/Syracuse, played by John Faal, and Dromio of Ephesus/Syracuse, played by

Brendan Matthew, are brilliant and are the focus of the piece, but this is ensemble playing at its best. The actors are finely tuned to each other's performance and there is a real sense they enjoy playing with each other and are working hard to bring this piece to life for the audience and they succeed in their endeavour.

There is a real treat in the last scene when the audience meets both sets of twins, Antipholus from Ephesus and Syracuse and Dromio from Ephesus and Syracuse. It's a clever device and suits the comical and physical elements of the show perfectly. Director Mark Giesser is to be congratulated on the creative energy provided by his cast in this flawless production.



Finely tuned: The cast of *The Boys from Syracuse* on stage in Highgate

An enchanting encounter with nature I'll never forget

By Oscar Bucherer-Ezer

Stumbling through thick undergrowth with ferns brushing my knees and detritus compressing softly underfoot. Insect wings flutter as they, like me, flee danger. I pause for breath and take in my surroundings. I see nothing but wilderness.

The trunks of trees, spreading all around and up the gentle bank sloping beside me, stand tall and still. We stand together, my dark green Woodcraft Folk shirt blending me into my surroundings, watching and waiting. Echoing calls carried on the wind sound safely distant... for now.

Suddenly a deeper voice sounds through the trees calling, "Dinner!". The danger having passed and the game of 'It' over, we emerge from the forest back to our dormitories. The week was certainly catching up with me; I'd hbeen outdoors for most of it, the hours packed with activities such as knot-tying, tree identification and acting.

So wrapped up was I in my thoughts that I didn't notice the rest of the group stop in their tracks with one of the parent volunteers pointing to the slope above us. Atop the ridge, peering down, stood a stag, its



Herts and soul: Countryside in reach of north London is waiting to be explored, including woodlands in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire

antlers fanning impressively out like the roots of the plant life around us. Massive and sure in stature, it was an awesome sight.

Almost 20 years later, the image remains on my mind, as does the rest of that fantastic week. These formative experiences were thanks to The Woodcraft Folk organisation promoting social cohesion and self-development, along with the enjoyment and protection of nature—things it seems this country could do with a little more of.

They are not alone in their activities. These initiatives for young people and their carers are springing up all over. Close to home, at Bishop Douglass School in East Finchley, the Bertha Earth project educates, engages and inspires in much the same way, with workshops and residential trips.

Enriching opportunities for young people exist. All they need might be some gentle encouragement to give these kinds of schemes a go.



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