

Chronicle Theater Review



An Upeat, Modern Twist On ‘Sense And Sensibility’ At Cape Playhouse



From left, Chris Tramantana, Charlotte Bydwell, Drew Hirshfield, and Katie Hartke in “Sense and Sensibility.” PHOTOS BY MAGGIE HALL PHOTOGRAPHY



Actors Jen Gambatese (Elinor) and Manna Nichols (Marianne).



Drew Hirshfield (Colonel Brandon) and Manna Nichols (Marianne).

by **Melissa De La Vega**

Make no mistake about it, this is not your mother’s Jane Austen!

Opening with big buzz last Wednesday night at the Cape Playhouse was Kate Hammill’s comedic adaptation of the beloved Jane Austen classic, “Sense and Sensibility.” Jessica Holt directed this reimagined story in a uniquely fresh way, jam-packed with humor and modern flair. In her third time directing this play, Holt believes that this show “sparkles with wit and theatrical magic,” and you can count on “Sense and Sensibility” to do just that!

You certainly do not have to be a die-hard Austen fan to enjoy the amusement that “Sense and Sensibility” delivers. The fun starts before the show even begins. As we enter the theater to find our seats, we are treated to the cast frolicking about on stage, tending to their costumes, chit-chatting amongst themselves or fixing their hair, all with complete implied ignorance of an audience watching on. This brilliant mechanism sets the tone for the rest of the show, which runs two and a half hours with one 15 minute intermission.

While the actors are dressed and speak in the English vernacular of the time of the novel, there are countless modern touches that add to the show’s originality. Popular songs are unexpectedly interjected throughout the plot and make for a truly riotous scene every time the music is pumped up. Just imagine Beyonce’s “Halo,” Ke\$ha’s “Tik ToK,” or Rihanna’s “We Found Love” playing in England in the 1700s! This was a brilliant touch!

“Sense and Sensibility” is about the Dashwood family, who suddenly find themselves fallen on hard times when Mr. Dashwood abruptly dies, leaving Mrs. Dashwood (Katie Hartke) and her three daughters, Elinor (Jenn Gambatese), Marianne (Manna Nichols) and young Margaret (Charlotte Bydwell) to fend for themselves. Stuck in a world full of social hierarchy, gossip, and the arduous task of finding suitable men to marry, the story follows the girls’ trials and tribulations as they navigate through their new reality trying desperately to find happiness. Each of these talented leading ladies brings delight to their characters, gracing the stage with a mix of elegance and charm. The three main suitors vying for the affection of a Dashwood daughter are Colonel Brandon (Drew Hirshfield), John Wiloughby (Erik Kochenberger), and Edward Ferrars (Noah Plomgren), gentlemen who are absolutely lovable, flawed and hilarious at the same time.

Rounding out the cast of characters are Fanny (Nandita Shenoy), Sir John Middleton (Christopher Tramantana)

and Mrs. Jennings (Britte Steele), three performers who you can’t take your eyes off of as they steal scenes left and right. Each cast member in “Sense and Sensibility” plays a variety of other roles in the show, including utterly comedically-timed animals (you’ve gotta go see it to believe it!). One of the best parts of the show are the Gossips who hover on the sidelines from scene to scene, watching and waiting for drama to unfold (even snacking on popcorn like they’re watching a guilty pleasure TV show!).

What a refreshing, fun way to experience an old classic! “Sense and Sensibility” is a show that will dazzle you with wit and whimsy and leave you wanting to come back for more! As the playbill states, “Have fun — Jane Austen would approve!”

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