

PQ Orlando Review

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Theatre Review (Spoiler Alert): Orlando

[PQ Monthly Staff](#) — [November 16, 2015](#)



“A smart script, elegant and understated design, great acting. It’s the best piece of theatre I’ve seen in a long time” – TJ Acena. Orlando is at Profile Theatre through November 22.

By TJ Acena, [PQ Monthly](#)

I went to [Orlando](#) without knowing it’s an adaption of a Virginia Woolf story by Sarah Ruhl. I didn’t even know the basic plot of the play, and that made the show a pleasant surprise. If you are someone who likes impeccably acted, beautifully designed, thoughtful modern theatre and doesn’t know anything about this show then just go. Go as soon as possible.

For those who want to know more then I’ll continue with the review. Spoilers ahead:

The titular Orlando (Beth Thompson) is a young English poet in Elizabethan England. Short on talent but full of life he sets out on a grand adventure in search of love and truth. This adventure ends up spanning hundreds of years and during his travels Orlando mysteriously becomes a woman. This twist is huge assuming you don’t know it’s going to happen. But now you do. As Orlando learns to navigate life as a woman, she becomes a way for Ruhl to critique traditional gender roles in society. And despite how forward thinking we feel we’ve come, in many ways the Western attitudes towards men’s and women’s roles haven’t advanced as much as we think they have.

Orlando is a funny play. A lot of humor comes from the way Orlando deals with her transition from man to woman and the expectations placed upon her. But a lot also comes from the chorus, the four actors who surround Orlando on stage, narrating his or her life with the wry sense of humor you can only get from omnipotence. The comic timing here is spot on. The chorus also plays the many lovers that come through Orlando’s life, lovers who range from frenzied caricatures to heartbreaking well-rounded characters. The range these actors display is impressive. This is really an ensemble piece, but Thompson performance carries the show, capturing the youthful melodrama and earnestness of a young man as well the wisdom and longing of a woman who has lived for centuries.

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