

'Comedy': No errors

By VICKI SANDERS

Herald Arts Writer

Some directors like to trespass. The good ones get away with it.

Richard Klees is one of the good ones. But he takes his chances.

The *Comedy of Errors* a la Klees is an intricately paced production that entered into rotating repertory at the Florida Shakespeare Festival at Vizcaya Friday night.

A hybrid that takes its stylistic cues from *commedia dell'arte* and vaudeville, it bumps and whistles and gongs. It bangs and pops and twangs. It catches and starts and roars about the outdoor stage like a locomotive with a warped chassis. When all is said and done, one expects the players to be bruised and bleeding; instead, they are just deliriously winded.

The sound effects, provided by a slightly off-center musician/noisemaker, are as pervasive as the linguistic puns and double entendres Shakespeare has shoveled into the script to fortify a plot that is itself a broad comic double-take.

Identical twin brothers and their identical twin slaves are lost at sea as children, a circumstance retold by their father Aegeon (Michael Mauldin) and ingeniously staged with a puppet show using apples and bananas as stand-ins for the kids.

Aegeon's quest for his offspring has brought him to a town where, unknown to him, one son, Antipholus of Ephesus (David Flynn), lives with his wife Adriana (Kathleen Brant) and the slave Dromio (Barry Mann). His other son, Antipholus of Syracuse (Tom Ryan), happens into the village at about the same time with his slave Dromio (Tom Ehas).

The ensuing confusion, brought on by all sorts of run-ins with mistaken identity, a frantic wife, a troublesome courtesan, debt collectors, jailers and a most peculiar abbess, is heated up to an almost boil-over degree by Klees. Nearly every move the actors make is punctuated by that infernal noisemaker, nearly every speech is delivered with breathless speed, nearly every nuance trussed up and put on a platter for display.

Theater Review

The Comedy of Errors

CAST

Duke Solinus: Cal Winn; Aegeon, Pinch: Michael Mauldin; Antipholus of Syracuse: Tom Ryan; Antipholus of Ephesus: David Flynn; Dromio of Syracuse: Tom Ehas; Dromio of Ephesus: Barry Mann; Adriana: Kathleen Brant; Luciana: Polly Stone; Aemilia: Rik Montgomery; Courtesan: Claudia Robinson.

CREDITS

Playwright: William Shakespeare; Director: Richard Klees; Sets: Robert Kates; Costumes: Jeffery Phipps; Lights: David Martin Jacques.

South Florida Theatre Company Shakespeare Festival at Vizcaya, 3251 South Miami Ave., 854-1983 or 447-1516.

And it all works.

Klees has steered this production past all the predictables and the probables toward a more tricky but ultimately more satisfying region of theatrical derring-do. He succeeds because his actors understand his intentions perfectly.

The best match is made with Ehas, whose besieged Dromio has the boneless quality of a scarecrow, all the better to be buffeted about by his unappreciative master. Mauldin is fine as Aegeon but he's absolutely wonderful as Pinch, a sorcerer whose own dementia is unlikely to dissolve Antipholus'. As the twins, Ryan and Flynn are neatly paired, though Ryan possesses the more natural charm; and Mann as the other Dromio is outdone only because Ehas' performance is so special. Brant would do well to at least give herself time for a breath between sentences, but Polly Stone is perfectly fetching as her sister Luciana.

Klees has had other good fortune: three fine collaborators in costume designer Jeffery Phipps, whose tumble-treated outfits weather uncommon abuses; lighting designer David Martin Jacques, and set designer Robert Kates. The colorful courtyard was a playful conjuring of peek-a-boo slits and trap doors.

The South Florida Theatre Company's fourth annual Shakespeare Festival continues to benefit from having its best cast ever.