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## audience reviews

### *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, West Sacramento Community Theater

**Review:** If you are planning to attend the show at the Old Sugar Mill, remember to bring a jacket with you! The place is beautiful, the food (sold separately) was very tasty. The play however... The set is simple, as I was expecting. Nothing to worry there, the simpler the better. But several, several details detracted me from being able to enjoy the show: stage hands (with the typical teenager pants waistline almost at his knees) parading up and down, actors going over their scripts in the distance, people just walking aimlessly about... I understand you have no proper wings, but just go to your place and stand still, be quiet at try to be out of sight! Then there is the singing at every single scene change. The first few times was quite cute, but after 2 hours - and her being out of pitch... and having to read her lyrics... it got on my nerves. The acting, saving some rare "cute" moments, was very poor in my humble - audience member opinion. Shakespeare comedies are supposed to be quick, the dialogue needs to come (as the bard said himself) "trippingly on the tongue". But every soliloquy (except of those delivered by the actor playing Ford) seemed to drag forever. Shakespeare also gave the wise advice for the actor: "do not saw the air too much with your hand" - every actor seemed to be under the impression that they had to explain the words with pantomimes, or making funny faces, or pretending to kick the other actor on the rear when they were exiting... it looked extremely childish... Accents are tough. Welsh accent, ok, it was consistent. Caius is supposed to be French. There is a reason for that. Not German. If the German was an inside joke to the fact that the French accent could not be executed properly, I didn't get it. And lastly... Falstaff... for the love of Pete, I prayed to all gods of theatre symbolism and still could not understand; "why on earth does he have to wear a... I don't know, something that looks like a fake penis in front of his genital area throughout the whole show?!!!!!" Aren't the words enough for us to get his lecherous behavior, do we REALLY need the visual aid?!!!! I mean, seriously... The costumes (other than Falstaff's "appendix") were great, congratulations. Ford tried hard. The hostess tried hard, but they did not have the support they needed to shine in their roles. But you struck me as very good actors. Other than that, I'm afraid I have nothing good to say of this production. As usual, this is one person's opinion...

- Gian Montesini

**Review:** Anyone attending this show will want to bring a warm coat and/or blanket as the wind did blow cold last night while we watched the show. I enjoyed feeling like I was actually in the production rather than just watching the stage. I really liked that the cast was able to use the whole courtyard of the Sugarmill as they moved through the area to come into another part of the stage. I enjoyed the little song

between scene changes and I thought it was a nice transition, instead of watching the volunteers in black move about the set pieces. She was pleasant and if not always right on pitch, I could see she was making effort and as I know I have come to watch a local theater production that makes points in my book. I often have trouble understanding all of the conversation, but that is because I have a difficult time understanding Shakespeare. As someone who is not a devout Shakespeare follower I really enjoyed the show. The actors seemed to interact with each other well and I felt plenty of energy from the cast. Overall I had a wonderful experience at this production and I would go again.

- St.Louis

**Review:** I thoroughly enjoyed seeing The Merry Wives of Windsor this past Saturday evening at Carvalho. The weather did turn chilly, so if you head out I would advise a jacket, but the wine was spectacular (Charbono!), the cast was very good, and the overall production was delightful. Merry Wives is one of Shakespeare's few contemporary pieces, and was not written in blank verse like Hamlet - it was written mostly in prose. So for some not familiar with the breadth of his works, it may be difficult to grasp the lack of flowery speech typical in his other plays. This rendition was really quite well done, down to the details of Will's inconsistency with the accent of Dr. Caius - in the play, he seems to vacillate between French, Spanish and German, playing upon the politics of the day. Falstaff was excellently portrayed, his gluttonous and lecherous behavior came alive. The addition of the very true-to-period codpiece had the audience cackling. The hostess was another delight, as was Ford - excellent performances from this cast. In all, an admirable freshman effort from this theater company. I had a wonderful evening, and I hope this venue has more offerings next summer.

**Review:** What a great venue! I truly enjoyed my evening at the theater set in the lovely courtyard. I brought my own picnic and enjoyed the wine that was sold by the glass. The show was entertaining, kept up a lively pace, and featured some very promising talents. My favorite character was the servant Simple. I couldn't wait for this actress to return to the stage for each scene. Her performance reminded me of Dopey from Snow White mixed with a little Peter Pan. Her choices were clever and focused... I had remembered her performance earlier in the year as Olivia in Twelfth Night (also very well done). Another notable performance was Falstaff's man, Pistol. This actor has a very good command of Shakespeare's language...intonation and pacing was VERY pleasing. Caius also sticks out in my memory; while there were shifts in his accent (perhaps this was intentional?) he had very good comedic timing and made some great choices. His interactions with the Welsh Reverend were very entertaining. This is a great community group who works very hard to make Shakespeare fun and accessible...I brought a newbie to the show and he laughed and truly thought the entire cast did a great job. I think that if Falstaff and his questionable costume was offensive, then it worked. Falstaff is offensive and crude and makes everyone feel just a little bit dirty...so Bravo!

**Review:** LOVED IT + the glorious setting! (Clarksburg)

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