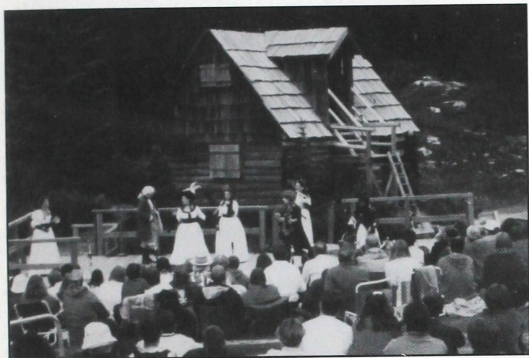


The Travelling Bard: From the Beach to the Mountain!

theatre

by Meredith Elliot



1997 Bard on the Peak Grouse Mountain performance of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Photo by Glen Erickson.

"All the world's a stage..."—it's one of William Shakespeare's best-known lines, from one of his most popular comedies, *As You Like It*. This summer, the stage for this merry romance is Vanier Park, where the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival continues through September 26. To test the spirit of the quote, Bard will also take *As You Like It* to the summit of Grouse Mountain for a special matinee performance, July 11 at

Below: David Marr as Berowne in the 1997 Bard on the Beach staging of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Photo by Glen Erickson.



1pm. This is the fifth year that the extremely successful Shakespeare Festival has left its summer home at Vanier Park to climb Grouse Mountain. Now in its ninth season, Bard on the Beach was created to provide Vancouver's residents and tourists with affordable, accessible Shakespearean productions of the finest quality.

This season, Bard on the Beach audiences will be treated to two of Shakespeare's most popular plays, the delightful romantic comedy *As You Like It* and the Bard's tale of ambition, lust, and murder, *Richard III*. Part of the attraction of attending Bard on the Beach is the chance to experience Shakespeare's poetry against a remarkable backdrop. The stage at Vanier Park is housed in a tent which opens at the back to reveal magnificent vistas of city, sea, and mountains.

Bard on the Peak, as the Grouse Mountain performance is called, grew out of a desire to perform Shakespeare in other spectacular settings, to indeed prove that all the world can be a stage. This year, the Bard company will venture to another location to perform *Richard III*: Christ Church Cathedral on September 13, 1998.

According to Bard's Artistic Director Christopher Gaze, these "off the beach" performances allow the company to demonstrate its versatility. There is minimal time for the company to rehearse on site, which means anything can happen in the performance. "It's an opportunity to create a completely impromptu performance," explains Gaze. "As well, it provides the audience with a more spontaneous and participatory theatrical experience." Last summer, for example, one of the actors posed for a mid-performance photograph for the audience,

then pretended to be blinded by the flash, prompting Gaze to announce that the scene was sponsored by Kodak.

North Vancouver resident David Marr, who plays Jaques in *As You Like It*, agrees that the staging on the mountain is freer and more unpredictable. "Because the set is different from what we normally play on, we have to use whatever we can to make the scene work. There's a lot more room for improvisation." Even the weather can be unpredictable. "One year, a fog bank swept in that was so thick it was difficult to see the other actors, but a few minutes later, everything was clear and sunny."

This is Marr's third season with Bard on the Beach and his third trip performing up the mountain. He has previously starred as the witty lovers Benedick and Berowne in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, has exited "pursued by a bear" in *The Winter's Tale*, and played Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. This season, in addition to Jaques, he plays the Duke of Buckingham in *Richard III*.

Tickets for Bard on the Peak are \$16 in advance and include the Skyride to the top of the mountain. The performance begins at 1pm, July 11 and there will be an open-air barbecue for audience members to make a day of it on the mountain.

The Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival runs June 10 to September 26 at Vanier Park, with *As You Like It* and *Richard III* running in repertory Tuesdays through Sundays. Tickets for the two plays, Bard on the Peak, and any other Bard on the Beach events are available through the Bard Box Office at 739-0559, or through Ticketmaster at 280-3311. ♦

Meredith Elliot is a freelance writer and the publicist for Bard on The Beach.