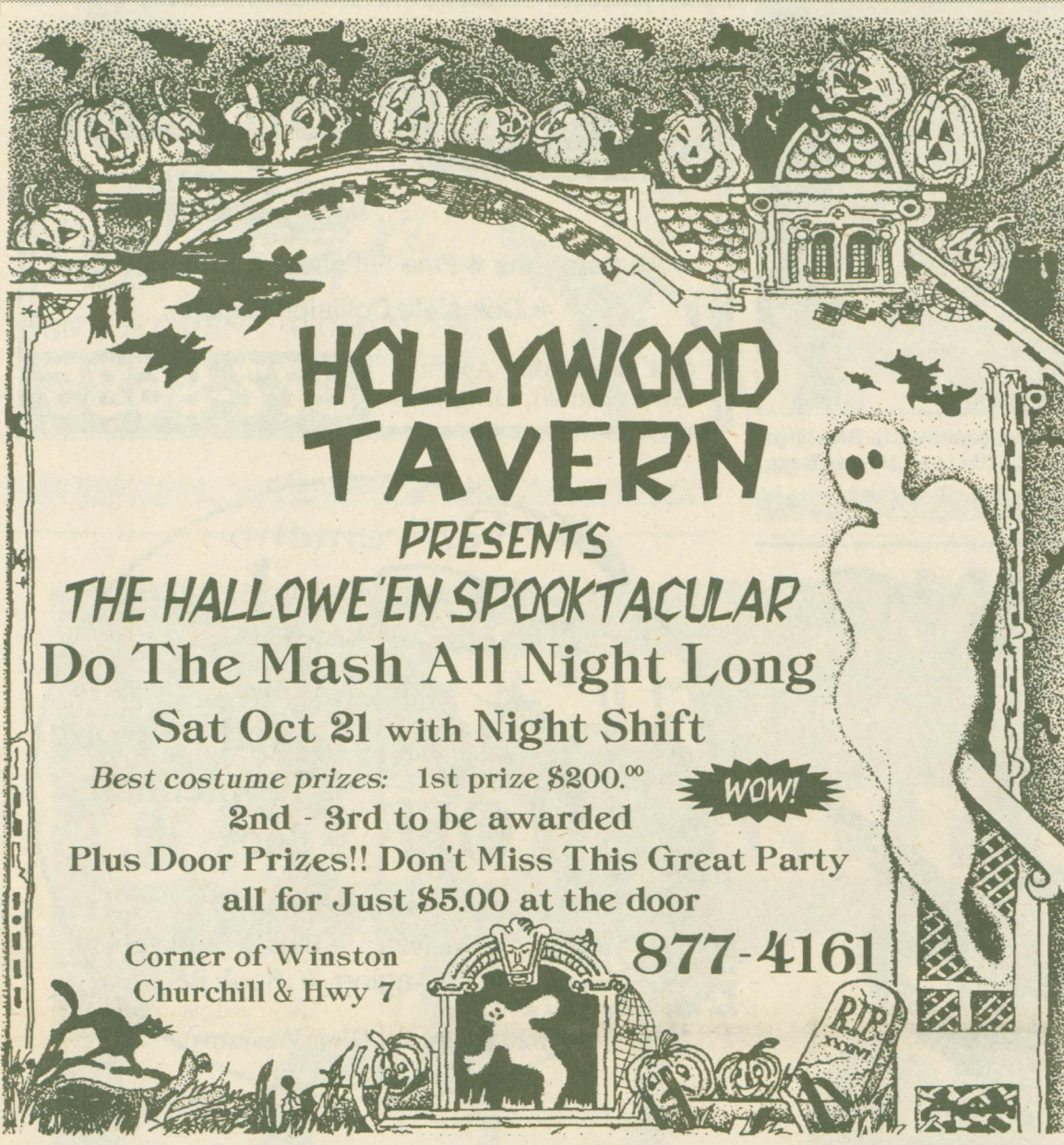


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By Wendy Long

Orlando, Orlando, wherefore art thou Orlando?

Georgetown Little Theatre opened its 1992-93 season Friday evening with a performance (to a full house) that combined the bawdy passion of Shakespeare with the modern humor and sensitivity of playwright Don Nigro. The Curate Shakespeare As You Like It is a journey into innovative theatre.

Professional director Mimi Mekler (on a grant from Theatre Ontario) and assistant director Peter Roe had quite a challenge on their hands with the tricky character twists and slick plot turns of The Curate Shakespeare.

The play tells the story of an amateur company tackling Shakespeare's As You Like It. Alas, there are only seven amateur actors to portray more than triple that number of Shakespearean characters. What to do.

The characters are believable in their intended initial awkwardness, with a simplicity that makes them approachable and endearing.

Ron Hill opened Act One strongly with a credible and commanding Curate role, slipping easily into a very funny Adam.

Accolades too, to Shiona Watson and Brigida Callaghan for their energetic portrayals of strong-willed Celia and Audrey.

Long stretches of Shakespearean verse was punctured with humorous idioms circa 1992. To the relief of an out-of-practise audience, narrator Rosalind (Kim Speer) kept the audience in touch with the Elizabethan action.

A highlight of the play was the antics of the clown, a versatile Ro Palumbo-Coates who successfully leapt through eight Shakespearean faces.

The hero, Orlando (Paul Ciglen), also produced a dual role as William with convincing depth. Cedric Briggs, alias Amiens and four others, shone too.

The stark scenery suited the tongue-in-cheek irony of the play, with some pleasantly comical animals tickling the action.

The play is interspersed with twists of humor that welcome even the Shakespearean illiterate. (Who would have thought that rap and Will could have gone together?)

Music for the performance was provided by Haydn Evans.

By Act Two the audience had forgotten the actors and actresses' demise as eloquence replaced clumsiness.

Much should be said of the brilliant final scene where Kim Speer delivers a speech to be reckoned with, surely in the very spirit that Shakespeare must have intended.

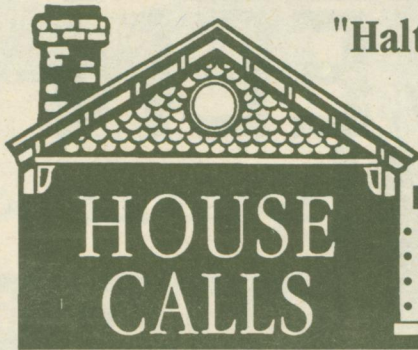
A word to the wise, though. Many people commented during the intermission that they wished they had glossed over As You Like It to fully appreciate the modern twist of The Curate Shakespeare.

The Curate Shakespeare As You Like It will be at the George Elliott Theatre until Halloween night, this Saturday.

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