**Descriptive Introduction for VocalEye Patrons**

**by Ingrid Turk**

Welcome to As You Like It, written by William Shakespeare, adapted and directed by Daryl Cloran and produced by Bard on the Beach Theatre Company, summer 2023.

Live pre-show notes will be given 25 minutes before curtain to accommodate the awesomely entertaining pre-show wrestling match that begins 15 minutes before curtain. You don’t want to miss that, so please be seated in time.

These written notes include a brief overview followed by a more detailed, narrative description of the set and costumes.

**Brief Overview**

The action takes place in the 1960’s. The main locations are Dame Frances’ wrestling arena in Vancouver and the orchards and hillsides of the Okanagan.

There are 23 characters in this production, played by a diverse cast of 15 performers, with some doubling.

In the theatre, characters may run up and down the aisles and in front of the stage, so please keep your belongings, your feet and your dogs safely tucked in.

Running time is 1 hour 15 minutes for Act 1 and 53 minutes for Act 2. There will be one 20 minute intermission.

**The Characters, in order of appearance:**

**At the Wrestling Arena in Vancouver**

Linesmen Quartet - the band: keyboards, drums, guitar, and bass guitar

Touchstone - the wrestling announcer, an employee of Dame Frances

Le Beau - the wrestling referee

Dame Frances - powerful business owner and wrestling impresario, she forced his twin, the Dame Senior out of the family business and banished her from Vancouver

Dame Frances’ Personal Assistant - a woman of indeterminate age

Mustachio - the first wrestler to challenge Charles the Wrestler

Eleanor Rigby - Mustachio's female companion and manager

Charles the Wrestler - the current All-Star Wrestling Champion

Oliver de Boys - manages Charles the Wrestler. He has held back his younger brother Orlando's inheritance and denied him an education.

Wrestling Twins - Challengers of Charles the Wrestler

Lady Danger - the Twins' mother

Rosalind - the daughter of the banished Duke

Celia - Dame Frances’ daughter, Rosalind's cousin

Orlando de Boys - the youngest of the de Boys heirs, denied his inheritance by his brother Oliver

Adam - an elderly faithful servant of the de Boys family

**In the Okanagan**

Dame Senior - forced out of the family business by Dame Frances, he was banished from Vancouver and has retreated to the Okanagan

Dame Senior’s companions include Jaques (pronounced Jay-kweez), a beatnik poet, and 4 Lords who sing and play musical instruments

Silvius - a farm lad, in love with Phoebe

Phoebe - a shepherdess

Corin - another shepherdess

Audrey - a simple farm girl

William - a local lad

**Detailed Descriptions**

The action takes place in the 1960’s. Vancouver is at the centre of a wrestling craze, and it’s here that Bard on the Beach has set this version of As You Like It.

It premiered here in 2018 and has gone on to charm audiences in Chicago, Milwaukee, Edmonton and Winnipeg. It’s evolved slightly since it premiered. Some of the cast have changed, some of the songs have been re-ordered, but it is still a story about love – love at first sight, mothers’ love for their daughters, loyalty, love of life, and giddy, romantic, hard-earned love.

Daryl Cloran adapted the play and says about adding the music,

“I have cut A LOT of Shakespeare’s text to make room for (the Beatles songs). The Bard’s story comes alive through song, particularly as the characters find themselves in the woods where emotions can no longer be contained by words alone. Orlando’s love letters become love songs. Amiens and the lords sing as they refine their philosophy about life and love. Even the evolution of the Beatles’ songwriting is perfect for the story arc of the play. The early Beatles songs are naïve and youthful, which is where the young lovers start. But as we meet the thinkers in the forest and life becomes more complicated, we are able to transition into the Beatles’ later, more spiritual and philosophical songwriting.”

If you’ve been to Bard on the Beach before, you’ll know that the back wall of this Mainstage tent is open to a north-facing view that includes trees, grass, the seawall, False Creek, Sunset Beach, West End high-rises, the North Shore mountains and the sky, one of the famous features of Bard on the Beach.

The set is designed by Pam Johnson, who has designed many productions here and knows how to design for maximum impact. For example, when the action in this play shifts to the Okanagan, the trees on the stage blend perfectly with the trees in the park beyond the festival site.

We start in Vancouver at one of the city’s most popular attractions, Super Star Wrestling. The Wrestling Arena is dominated by a 16-foot square wrestling ring with white posts, white ropes and a thickly padded white floor. An overhead mic dangling on a long cable is used to announce the matches, then raised out of the way. There is a broad, high catwalk spanning the stage which functions as a balcony and a bridge. During the wrestling match, the balcony serves as the Dame’s private viewing box.

A banner is draped across the front of the balcony that reads:

“All-Star Wrestling Tonight! Charles the Wrestler Takes On All! Cash Prize!” High above the ring hangs a briefcase so crammed with money that the bills are bursting out of it.

The musicians, drumkit and keyboards are grouped on a low platform underneath the balcony.

Panelled light boxes frame the stage from the floor to the top of the tent, changing colour with the mood of the scene or song, and the floor has colourful pop-art daisies painted on it.

When the action moves to the Okanagan, the wrestling ring is swiftly dismantled and taken away by actors and crew while Orlando and Adam travel one way and Rosalind and Celia in disguise and Touchstone travel another way. Apple trees flank the stage and scattered tree stumps provide seating. On the right-hand side of the stage is a grassy knoll with wildflowers growing around a little pond, and three tree trunks from a long-ago orchard.

A Flower Power Volkswagen Peace bus chugs into the orchard behind the band, brightly painted with flowers, peace signs and slogans and the windows are outlined with twinkle lights.

**The Costumes**

The costumes are designed by Carmen Alatorre and are inspired by the Beatles evolving fashion and hairstyle choices. She worked with local star shoe designer John Fluevog to find the right shoes for each character, and some of them are spectacular, with names like Sugarcandy, Sheila, and Jazzy.

For example, Audrey and Phebe each wear platform slingbacks that feature chunky heels, floral appliqués, and buckles that match the contrasting soles. Imagine glossy, baby blue 1” platform soles with scarlet red leather uppers embellished with white daisies. Or Yellow-soled platforms with green and orange uppers.

Touchstone’s shoes are black oxfords with a black-and white-checkerboard pattern that makes it appear as though he’s wearing ballet slippers. Giant ballet slippers.

The men’s understated Chelsea boots, a style popularized by the Beatles, are black or brown with contrasting, curving elastic gussets and leather tabs.

Costume Designer Alatorre says in the programme: “In urban Vancouver the silhouettes are sleek and sophisticated. The men sport mop-top haircuts and dark, tailored, collarless suits worn with skinny ties. The women wear slim dresses and stiletto heels…” with backcombed hairstyles like the beehive. Once the action moves to the Okanagan a more relaxed, hippie style prevails, with outfits inspired by the Beatles’ Maharishi period.”

The wrestling costumes are characterized by shiny fabrics in flashy colours, and light-weight lace-up boots with flexible soles. The boots reach mid-calf and are cut slightly lower at the back than at the front. The wrestlers wear singlets, which are a combination of trunks and tank top, or briefs, accessorized with capes or robes. The costumes sparkle under the bright lights of the wrestling arena.

Providing the music tonight is the LINESMEN QUARTET consisting of keyboards, drums, guitar, and bass guitar, the four musicians wear black and white striped short-sleeved polo shirts like referees, with slim black pants and plain black boots. Not only do they play the music, we can hear them singing, too.

After an instrumental set by the band to help create the mood, Touchstone, the announcer, seizes the microphone and gets the show started. He is in his late 30s, about 5'10", lanky and languorous. He has a shock of unruly, red-blond hair worn in a short shag haircut. He wears a double-breasted jacket with narrow rainbow stripes and large purple buttons, and tight purple and blue striped slacks. A shiny red cravat is tied around his neck and his shoes are black and white checkered oxfords. Later he wears a white and multi-coloured paisley shirt and psychedelic pink and red vest. He’s an outrageous mixture of Elton John and Austin Powers.

Th referee is M. LE BEAU. He’s in his 50s, about 5'8" with a solid build, and moves briskly. His dark blond hair is collar-length, pushed behind his ears. He wears a black and white striped short-sleeved polo shirt with black collar and cuffs, slim black pants, and black oxfords.

Overseeing the action with a martini in hand, is DAME FRANCES, a powerful business owner and the wrestling impresario. She forced her sister, the Dame Senior out of the family business and banished her from Vancouver. She is petite and slim, her movements are confident and aggressive. She is heavily made-up with winged eyeliner and bright red lipstick, reminiscent of Joan Crawford. Her chic dress is of purple wool, cinched at the waist with a wide belt, and a large, purple pillbox hat is perched toward the back of her carefully styled black bouffant hair. She wears long white gloves and carries a boxy black purse looped on one arm.

Dame Frances has a PERSONAL ASSISTANT, a brisk woman of indeterminate age, black hair swept into a modest beehive, who quick and efficient. She wears a slim green wool dress with a pointy white collar and sensible pumps. She keeps the Dame’s martinis flowing.

Once the wrestling match starts, MUSTACHIO is the first wrestler to challenge Charles the Wrestler. He is in his 50s, tall and definitely soft around the middle. Nevertheless, he is defiant. His curly blond hair is chin-length, and his pale blond horseshoe moustache droops to his chin. He wears a shiny copper coloured cape over a yellow wrestling singlet. His wrestling boots are also shiny copper and reach his calves.

Mustachio is cheered on by his gold-digging companion, ELEANOR RIGBY. This petite woman has a tall, dark beehive hairdo with bangs, and is wearing a black, short-sleeved mini dress zipped up the front with tall silver go-go boots and a matching belt.

Challenging Mustachio is CHARLES THE WRESTLER, the cocky current All-Star Wrestling Champion. He’s in his 30s, easily 6' tall, muscular with a well-defined six pack, with short black hair and a trim black moustache. His blue satin robe is trimmed in white, he wears a white cowboy hat, and tiny blue wrestling trunks with white trim. His wrestling boots are blue with white trim. He wears an enormous white championship wrestling belt, so large that it almost conceals his trunks.

Charles is supported and encouraged by his manager, OLIVER DE BOYS, the ambitious older brother of Orlando, who we meet shortly. Oliver has held back Orlando's inheritance and denied him an education. He is in his 40s, about 5'10" with a slim build. His movements are sharp and aggressive. His short blond hair is parted on the side, and he wears a slim black suit with a turquoise shirt and skinny dark blue tie.

The second challengers of Charles the Wrestler are the TWIN ASSASSINS. They are twins in their 20s, short and wiry, one has long blond hair and the other has short blond hair. They wear shiny green capes and green and blue singlets; it seems that they will stop at nothing to win.

The twins are encouraged by LADY DANGER, their mother. In her 50s, plump and pushy, she wears a green and white tweed skirt suit with white fur trim at the collar and cuffs. A white fur pillbox hat tops her dark red bobbed hair coming slightly askew when the going gets tough.

Attending the wrestling match are ROSALIND and her cousin, CELIA. Rosalind is the daughter of the banished Dame and who will eventually disguise herself as a young man named Ganymede. She is in her 20s, about 5'6" and very fit. Her long black hair is worn bouffant style with brown headband. She wears a simple short-sleeved red dress with a white collar and cuffs*.* Around her neck is a gold locket on a chain. When disguised as GANYMEDE, her black hair is cut short and parted on the side. Ganymede wears a sharp royal blue tailored suit that includes a vest over a hot pink shirt. These are accessorized with a black tie decorated with dandelions and striped blue and white suspenders with black Chelsea boots that allow for dancing. As Ganymede in the Okanagan, she sheds first the jacket, then the vest, and at last the tie as she falls more and more in love with Orlando.

Rosalind's sensible cousin CELIA is Dame Frances's daughter. Celia will disguise herself as Aliena, Ganymede’s sister. She is in her 20s, about 5'5" tall, curvy and dark-skinned. She wears a simple short-sleeved blue and grey patterned dress with a white collar, and cuffs. In disguise as ALIENA, Ganymede's sister, she changes to a short sleeved pale green patterned blouse with a peplum flaring out from her waist over matching capris and ballet flats.

An unexpected challenger to Charles the Wrestler is ORLANDO DE BOYS, the younger of the de Boys heirs who has been denied his inheritance by his older brother Oliver. He is quite tall, in his 20s, and well-built. His face is round, and his tousled curly black hair falls over his forehead. He moves with purpose and energy. He wears shabby grey coveralls and a matching flat cap. Later, he wears slim black slacks and a red polo shirt with two wide black stripes down the front.

Orlando is mentored by ADAM the elderly, faithful servant of the de Boys family, who is tall but quite stooped. He is balding, with grey hair past his collar and scruffy muttonchop whiskers. He shuffles when he walks and moves slowly and deliberately. He wears shabby grey coveralls and a matching flat cap.

Orlando and Adam end up in the Okanagan, where DAME SENIOR, Rosalind’s mother, forced out of the family business by Dame Frances, and banished from Vancouver, has retreated to contemplate philosophy and the big questions of life. Like Dame Frances, she is petite and slim. Her long, golden-brown hair is a cascade of curls held back from her face with a narrow black leather headband. she wears a long tunic of muted brown and yellow flowers with flared sleeves over soft brown bellbottoms. Her platform sandals are red and black, and she wears several long strings of coloured beads around her neck*.* Her eyes are framed by amber-tinted granny glasses.

The Dame Senior’s companions include Jaques (pronounced Jay-kweez), a beatnik poet, and five Lords who sing and play musical instruments.

JAQUES, the morose poet, is in his 50s, tall with a little paunch. His scruffy strawberry blond hair is worn on the short side, as if he’s growing it out, and he wears a skinny black turtleneck with a large gold, abstract medallion dangling low on his chest, brown paisley corduroy pants and brown Chelsea boots. He wears nerdy, black-framed glasses.

Dame Senior is accompanied by her loyal LORDS, who happen to be the musicians from the band. Their clothes are reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix and Donovan, their tunics, vests, and bellbottom pants are shades of purple and green for some of the lords, brown and yellow for the others. Ruffles abound, and one of lord has shaggy fur trim on their vest. Two of them have afros, the others wear their hair long and loose. A couple of them wear granny glasses. Lord Amiens plays lead guitar and is featured several times.

Several characters local to the Okanagan become entangled with the Vancouverites:

SILVIUS is a lanky, earnest farmer in love with his neighbour, Phebe. He is in his 30s, tall and slim, he seems to sway as he moves. His long brown hair is tucked behind his large ears. He wears loose overalls and a red plaid flannel shirt.

The object of his affections, PHEBE, is a young shepherdess, slender with long curly black hair held back from her face with a wide white band. The hems of her tight flared jeans are banded with rows of red and yellow rickrack.She wears *a* yellow peasant blouse with a fringed brown leather vest over it. Her shoes are platform sandals of pink and blue with a large white flower motif*.*  She uses her whole body to express herself, thrusting her torso forward when she sneers or flipping her luxuriant hair in dismissal.

CORIN is a good-natured, middle-aged shepherd who has a knack for befriending strangers, and who takes a shine to Ganymede and Aliena. She wears a pale blue kerchief to hold her bobbed black hair away from her round face. Her simple cotton capri pants are blue, she wears a pale blue shirt and a pink bolero vest with tiny flowers scattered across it.

AUDREY is a lusty farmer in her 30s, with a herd of goats. She is buxom in a blue rodeo shirt tied at the waist and bright blue slacks. Her long brown hair is worn in two curly pigtails with a little red kerchief. She wears brown cowboy boots and is not light on her feet.

WILLIAM is another farmer who has been courting Audrey. He’s dressed simply in a brown sheepskin vest with his jeans, wearing a flat cap and clutching a bouquet of wildflowers.

**We hope you enjoy the show!**