

newsdesk: 01284 757857

Austen classic captivates as Luscombe's play adaptation

Mansfield Park, Theatre Royal, September 18

review

WHILE initially hesitant about how well a lengthy Jane Austen novel would translate to the stage, I soon found myself at ease in the audience.

Tim Luscombe's marvellous adaptation captured the story's drama without omitting the author's wit or quirky character details.

The cast of eight delivered faultless and convincing character portrayals, with Ffion Jolly giving a stand-out performance as the play's heroine, Fanny Price, and Geoff Arnold particularly memorable in his role as Mr Rushworth. Using a single actor to play up to three characters was not distracting and left no doubt as to the talents of the cast.

The increasing pace of the play and quick delivery of actors' lines commanded the full attention of audience members who, myself included, could not refrain from

laughing-out-loud on cue. The use of one simplistic set, for all of the story's changing locations, worked surprisingly well, with only subtle props, occasional sound effects and costume changes to assist the cast.

The play's success was a testament to the hard work of all involved in it, a fantastic and captivating presentation of a classic Austen tale.

Theatre-goers also had the opportunity to buy a programme which contained the play in full and made a great memento to take away.

This is a must-see for any Austen fan and, with a Theatrebus service being run for all evening performances until Tuesday, getting to the theatre could not be easier.

The full timetable is available on

the Mansfield Park page of www.theatreroyal.org Mansfield Park, in partnership with its sponsor, ourburystedmunds, will be touring nationally until the end of November and, if Tuesday's performance is anything to go by, this is one play Bury St Edmunds can be proud of.

Laura Smith

FAMILY TIES: Henry Crawford, played by Samuel Collings, with his sister in the play Mary Crawford, played by Kristin Atherton



STANDING OUT: Ffion Jolly as Mansfield Park's heroine, Fanny Price