

Shakespeare • Common Lack of Insight

The play tonight, *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare, by the Bell Shakespeare Company, was excellent. Thank you to everyone who made it possible that we could attend.

This is not a review of the play or the performance. I would like to canvass an issue, in order to confirm if it is worth writing up.

In answering a question after the show, John Bell said:

"Shakespeare didn't push any morals or philosophy, one way or the other", and

"there is no main theme [or purpose]".

That shocked me. Of course the opposite is true, and that used to be common knowledge for anyone studying Shakespeare (at least it was when I went to school 43 years ago). Watching or reading Shakespeare grabs us, even if we have never heard him before, even if we have never been to the theatre before. We know it is something deep and meaningful, we know we have been touched deeply. But no one seems to know why.

I must say, in normative terms, none of the analyses I found out the web, which are contemporary, had any insight either, they were all bland and superficial, pathetic, because the subject is a rich and deep one. The web certainly is good for nothing.

I was even more shocked that the good Mr Bell has no insight at all into the character he played. Jacques is not, and was not, a merely melancholy and contrary old fool.

I raised my hand during question time, but I didn't get picked to ask my question. However, after the photo opportunity, I approached Mr Bell, and I asked him if he had the time, that I would like to present what I considered the main theme and purpose of the play, and that I wanted his opinion on it. He kindly indulged me. I presented the main theme, in short form of course, but listing every item, and he heartily agreed with me.

Marvellous. But that contradicts his first answer.

The company was moving toward the door, so I didn't deal with the relevance of Jacques.

Of course, that does not subtract from the fact that the production was excellent. I can only imagine what it would have been, had the company had deeper insights into the Bard of Stratford and his Works.

Feedback please, is this a topic that is worth an essay?

The Deeper Meaning (or the Real Theme) in Shakespearean Drama.

Which unfortunately seems to be lost these days. The title should be simply the Theme of Shakespearean Drama, but as I mentioned, there are mountains alleging to be such posted on the web, and they are not that. So the title is misused and abused, and bland, superficial nonsense passes for praiseworthy analysis. Therefore the sad situation, and not the content, calls for a different title.

Writing preferred, although verbal reports are gratefully accepted.

Cheers

Derek

PS. Since some of you have asked, let me say that yes, by the Grace of God, I have tertiary education in Computer Science, but no, my knowledge of Literature, Shakespeare, and History is pure high school, and nothing but. Believe you me, I am so grateful to God that He sent me, an unworthy beggar, to *that* high school for boys.

DA