



BWW Reviews: Troubies Score Once More at the Falcon

by Don Grigware



Two Gentlemen of Chicago

presented by the Troubadour Theatre Company under the direction of [Matt Walker](#) @ [Falcon Theatre](#) through April 22

They've done it again, by George, or should I say, by Will! They've topped themselves once more! The Troubies emerge super victorious with their presentation of Shakespeare's perhaps first ever play *Two Gentlemen of Verona* to the tunes of the rock band Chicago, renamed - you guessed it - *Two Gentlemen of Chicago*. Now at the Falcon, it's Shakespeare but in a fashion quite unlike anything the Bard imagined. The original play has a dog Crab, and Roosevelt the Pug (in picture above) lives up to his scene stealing image, making him a new canine star. Cast with the usual Troubie zanies [Matt Walker](#), [Beth Kennedy](#), Rick Batalla, [Morgan Rusler](#) and guest [Rob Nagle](#) as Valentine and Rue the Pug, *Two Gentlemen of Chicago* becomes more satisfying than what those other *Two Guys* offer... well, ok, if that's pizza, then this is like the best darn treat on the planet!

Shakespeare's plot for *Two Gentlemen* is very involved, and there are a multitude of character issues, so the Troubies' schtick fits right in. Proteus' servant Launce (Kennedy), for example, does practically a whole standup set with Crab; Batalla who doesn't know the meaning of the word *sparingly* and loves to milk every scene he's in, gets ample opportunity as Proteus' father Antonio in a huge fright wig and sounding like [Tim Conway](#)'s old man from *The Carol Burnett Show*. There's also plenty of time for Rusler to camp it up as the Duke of Milan, nicknamed Dukie, and for Katie Nunez and [Lisa Valenzuela](#) as Lucetta and Bruschetta, respectively, Julia's ([Christine Lakin](#)) over zealous maids. They put a new spin on the industriousness of *The Help!* Walker is more subdued this time around certainly giving edge to his Proteus, but keeping him sincere and dramatically focused. Kennedy is hilariously brilliant, and as well as Launce, she brings her Winter Warlock character on stilts into Shakespeare for the first time. Lakin is sweet and loveable as Julia and [Monica Schneider](#) adds vibrant touches to the victimized Silvia. Nagle is terrific as Valentine in and out of white face and powdered wig, never letting the campy appearance and style make light of his strength and conviction.

Walker has directed beautifully, diving directly into the action at the very onset and keeping the pace spinning like a top. The Troubies' particular brand of excess is their trademark, and it is expected, but now more than ever it is utilized intelligently and meaningfully as the plot dictates, only occasionally

detouring into unexplained silliness. The basic set by Jeffrey McLaughlin is in a class by itself, with the band centerstage behind a sheer black see-through curtain and elegant sheeny gold curtains on both sides, which open and close with split second timing many, many times throughout the show. Costumes by Sharon McGunigle are colorful and period perfect. Chicago's splendid rock music - 16 tunes - are essayed superbly by the company and the seven-piece band under the musical supervision of [Eric Heinly](#); "Color My World", "Just You and Me", "Baby, Please Don't Go", "Does Anybody Know What Time It Is?", "Wishing You Were Here", and "Saturday in the Park" are all joyfully included.

Don't be misled by the Troubies' clownish behavior, these *fools* are great actors who hardly need to brush up their Shakespeare. There's is no greater example than [Matthew Morgan](#) and [Beth Kennedy](#) recapping the plot at the top of the second half, where they comically define a whole batch of rhyming words trippingly on the tongue! Terrific stuff! *Two Gentlemen of Chicago* is super great entertainment not to be missed!

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