

MEASURE FOR MEASURE RESTRUCTURED

Siege Perilous at the Civic Theatre

11.10.01

185 words

The sponsors have forced Shakespeare's name off the programme. Nokia, Bay Trading and the rest are the look of this fresh young production, with its latte louts, its Powerpoint presentation and its micro scooter.

Does this bring Shakespeare back to life for the Zap generation ?

Yes, when it tells the story clearly and succinctly in 100 minutes. Despite the varied accents much of the verse speaking was good, especially from Neil Howman as Angelo, though he looked anything but " austere and unsoiled ". The spirit of Shakespeare shone through in Julia Rounthwaite's performance as the cheeky " fantastick " Lucio, and there were lots of clever ideas - the evangelist Friar, St Luke's Coffee House, and the many multimedia moments.

No, when it fails to make the text transparent for us. Andy Corelli's inspired " restructuring ", which aimed to make 21st century sense of a difficult play, worked best if you already knew the plot at least a little, and no amount of music and video is going to illuminate Shakespeare's words. That's what the actors are there for.

MICHAEL GRAY: 'Chelmsford Weekly'