

A Millennium Measure Of Measure Hill Street

If you thought Shakespeare in a modern setting is a bit seen-it done-it, you have to believe me that Siege Perilous Project has come up with a potent, refreshing angle on one of Shakespeare's darker comedies. The tale of the Duke of Venice attempting to keep his subjects in order is neatly downsized and pumped up for the modern corporate environment. Equally hierarchical, each member of staff is power-dressed to the hilt, disporting a battery of power toys, while office politics bring Machiavelli to the desktop with the click of a mouse. Against a backdrop of much exchanging of business cards and comparing of PDAs, the Duke is an MD fast losing the boardroom battle to maintain company morale. Faced with a rising tide of backbiting, behind the scenes dealing, sexual harassment and sleaze, he has no option but to play the long game. There seems to be a new wave of productions where the Bard's words are rendered as if a contemporary dialect, enabling them to be spoken and heard as if for the first time, freed of centuries of baggage. That is the case here, producing unexpected opportunities for humour and revealing extraordinary depths of characterisation. Slick, scary and scurrilous, this is my type of Shakespeare.

Nick Awde: 'The Stage'