



Richard Donnelly as Antigonus in The Gamm production of "The Winter's Tale." (Photo courtesy of The Gamm)



'Winter's' *Return*

As the world marks the 400th anniversary of his death, The Gamm tackles one of Shakespeare's 'problem plays.' Review, **G6-G7**

MOVIES

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Tori Kelly finds herself on verge of pop stardom. Interview, G8

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The Notester has his sights, and appetite, set on New Bedford, G11

GO THEATER

On stage

MURDER BALLAD, through April 30, Wilbury Theatre Group, 393 Broad St., Providence. Indie rock musical. \$15 to \$25. 401-400-7100, thewilburygroup.org
LITTLE WOMEN, through May 1, MMAS Black Box Theater, 377 North Main St., Mansfield. Performances Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m.; 2 p.m. Sundays. \$29 general, \$25 Thursday nights when purchased through box office at 508-339-2822. www.mmas.org
JERSEY BOYS, through May 1, Providence Performing Arts Center, 220 Weybosset St., downtown Providence. www.ppacri.org, 401-421-2787
ARNIE LOUIS AND BOB, through May 8, Trinity Rep, 201 Washington Street, Providence. 401-351-4242, www.trinityrep.com
ANYTHING GOES, through May 22, Ocean State Theatre, 1245 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick. \$39 to \$59. www.OceanStateTheatre.org, 401-921-6800
THE WINTER'S TALE, through May 29, The Gamm Theatre, 172 Exchange St., Pawtucket. \$41 and \$49; preview performances (April 21-24) \$30. 401-723-4266, gammtheatre.org.

COMING SHOWS

REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS: A LIFE IN THEATRE, April 29 through May 22, Mixed Magic Theatre, Lorraine Mills, 560 Mineral Spring Ave., Pawtucket. Written and performed by Ricardo Pitts-Wiley. \$20. 401-305-7333, www.mmtri.com
EDUCATING RITA, May 5 through 22 (previews April 29-May 1), 2nd Story Theatre, 28 Market St., Warren, R.I. \$30 general, \$20 under 21, \$10 previews. 401-247-4200, Boxoffice@2ndstorytheatre.com, 2ndstorytheatre.com
OKLAHOMA!, May 5 through June 5, Trinity Rep, 201 Washington St., Providence. \$25 to \$71. www.trinityrep.com, 401-351-4242
THE MAN FROM EARTH, May 6 to 22, Bates Masonic Lodge, 71 North Main St., Attleboro. Attleboro Community Theatre production of science-fiction writer Jerome Bixby play. Show times 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays. Performances followed by 15-minute talk-back cast and crew. Tickets: https://squareup.com/store/acttickets, 508-226-8100, attleborocommunitytheatre-ACT@gmail.com, at door.
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, Charlie Brown, weekends May 6-11, Footlighters Playhouse at 2 Scout Rd., Walpole. Norton's Heather Vieira will portray Lucy. \$25. 508-668-8446, www.footlighters.com
MISS SAIGON, May 6 and 7, 7:30 p.m.; May 8, 2 p.m., Stadium Theatre, 28 Monument Square, Woonsocket. Encore Repertory Co. production. \$21 and \$26. 401-762-4545, www.stadiumtheatre.com
DOGFIGHT, May 7 through June 4, Roberts Studio Theatre, Stanford Calderwood Pavilion, Boston Center for the Arts, 527 Tremont St., Boston. Presented by SpeakEasy Stage Company. \$25+. 617-933-8600, www.SpeakEasyStage.com
IN THE BODY OF THE WORLD, May 10 through 29, American Repertory Theater, Loeb Drama Center, 64 Brattle St., Cambridge. Written and performed by Eve Ensler, directed by Diane Paulus. \$25+. 617-547-8300, AmericanRepertoryTheater.org

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GO THEATER

Gamm makes best of ‘The Winter’s Tale’

Review

BY KATHIE RALEIGH
CORRESPONDENT

PAWTUCKET — Nobody does Shakespeare like The Gamm. Productions are lively, hilarious when called for, heart-breaking when tragic, and accessible, even in Elizabethan English.

All that’s true of The Gamm’s current production of “The Winter’s Tale.” The problem is this is Shakespeare’s “problem play.” It starts out like a tragedy, takes an incongruously comic turn, and then asks us to suspend disbelief and accept the unlikely ending.

It’s all over the map, and takes more than two and a quarter hours to make that figurative trip. Fortunately, along the way, The Gamm gives us great performances.

The tale begins as Leontes, King of Sicily, is begging his friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia, to extend his months-long visit a few more days. When Queen Hermione takes her husband’s part and implores Polixenes to accept the invitation, he finally agrees.

But when Leontes spies Polixenes and Hermione talking and laughing together, he flies into the proverbial jealous rage. He imprisons his wife on suspicion of infidelity, decides their newborn daughter is illegitimate and orders her abandoned in the wild, and plots to poison Polixenes.

The Gamm’s artistic director, Tony Estrella, plays Leontes, and when he rages he does it with such conviction that we hate him for being so irrational. That’s a strong emotional reaction to a character we’ve just met, and a credit to the acting.

Meanwhile, poor Hermione falls ill and is taken away by her friend, Paulina, who returns to report the queen has died — and



Above: Mark S. Cartier as Old Shepherd and Marc Dante Mancini as Clown in The Gamm’s production of “A Winter’s Tale.” Left: Bedros Kevorkian as Mamillius and Tony Estrella as King Leontes. (Photos courtesy of The Gamm)

“The Winter’s Tale” probably isn’t one of Shakespeare’s Top 10, but The Gamm, as always, makes it lively, hilarious and heartbreaking, thanks to some fine performances.

so has Leontes’ young son, Mamillius, out of sadness at losing his mother. Suddenly, Leontes sees the error of his ways.

Now the play skips ahead 16 years. Leontes remains despondent and has no idea the exiled baby, Perdita, has been rescued

by Old Shepherd, has grown into a beautiful young woman, and has fallen in love with Polixenes’ son, Florizel.

Now that’s an intriguing twist in the plot, but it’s interrupted by wacky comedy involving Autolycus, a peddler and pick-pocket, and Clown, the dimwitted son of Old Shepherd. Marc Dante Mancini is hilarious as the clueless Clown who is repeatedly robbed by Autolycus — played by the real clown, Fred Sullivan Jr. They’re funny, but I was ready to get back to the story.

Finally, plot machinations take us back to Sicily where Leontes is still wallowing in regret — until reconciliation, redemption and Hermione’s reappearance lead to a happy ending.

There are enough plot lines for three plays, but Sullivan, who directs as well as

acts in this production, keeps the action on pace while still allowing time for wrenching emotion from the likes of the misjudged Hermione, well played in both good times and bad by a luminous Karen Carpenter.

Always watchable are Jeff Church as the young and smitten Florizel, and Nora Eschenheimer as Perdita, the deserving object of his affection. Mark S. Cartier does a nice job with the inadvertent humor in the role of Old Shepherd.

The scene stealer just might be Jeanine Kane as Paulina, Hermione’s loyal defender who stares down adversaries, including the king, with a don’t-cross-me look. Kane also is tops at breaking the logjam of Shakespeare’s wordy dialogue and making it sound conversational.

That dialogue, of course, holds some gorgeously colorful phrases, like Leontes’ order “to give mine enemy a lasting wink,” meaning: poison him and put him to sleep for good. Or the Old Shepherd’s description of secretive sex: “This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door-work”; and the phrase I’ll be using for bad weather: “The day frowns more and more.”

The language is creative, and so is The Gamm’s set. Designer Patrick Lynch suggests settings both royal, with a wall of filmy curtains, scone lights and a throne, and rustic with a darker backdrop for the comic scenes.

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“**THE WINTER’S TALE**” continues through May 29 at The Gamm Theatre, 172 Exchange St., Pawtucket. Tickets are \$41 and \$49. (401-723-4266, gammtheatre.org)