

UT production of Shakespeare's comedy is true to the period

By Kevin Phinney
American-Statesman Staff

Those who best enjoy Shakespeare in his proper historical setting will undoubtedly find happy sanctuary in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, one of the Bard's earliest works and currently onstage at the University of Texas. Shakespeare's text is unimpaired with the pro-abbey collegiate, calmer, and the comedy concerns the conflict of two friends in love with the same maiden. At the outset in Verona, Proteus (John Catanzaro) al-

Review

ready has a fiancée, a clever and fiery lady of breeding, Julia (Linda Pennington). Proteus' friend, Valentine (Joe Reynolds), is sent away to court at Milan, where he falls under the amorous spell of Sylvia (Lisa Carter), daughter of the Duke. After some time, Proteus joins him in Milan, but not before pledging his undying devotion to Julia.

Within the first five minutes of his arrival at Milan, though, Proteus is likewise smitten by the

swrite Sylvia, and schemes to undo her arranged marriage to Thurio (Michael Hartman) as well as her unfolding romance with Valentine. Thus he betrays his friend, spurns his betrothed and earns the contempt of the woman he loves.

Shakespeare tests the limits of believability in the denouement, in which Proteus is forgiven in an act's twisting the transgressions that almost ruined the lives of his loved ones. It's as though Shakespeare looked at a stopwatch (hourglass?) and realized his play needed swift conclusion, and so put an early end to the antagonism without ample reason.

Director Kathleen Conlin gets capable performances from her cast of students, particularly Catanzaro, Pennington and Carter. Reynolds has the coltish look of a young hero, and exudes only confidence to improve. UT character actors Joey Wassel and Joey Hartigan share the grasp of style that separates classroom comprehension from an actor's implementation.

Conlin has allowed two different styles of acting in her production, those of the comic actors in central roles, and those farcical performers who flesh out the periphery. For a group of wayward highwaymen, Conlin's direction more suggests

Keystone Cops than Shakespeare, but it is ultimately of small consequence.

Behind-the-scenes technician David Nancarrow is responsible for the graces beauty of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. His set does not draw focus, but is direct and authoritative nonetheless. That he lit a show full of white and off-white cos-

umes so well is also no mean accomplishment. Generally, lights wash out both clothes and actors; but his light plot only flatters Paul D. Reinhardt's fanciful costume designs.

Two Gentlemen of Verona continues through April 26 at the R. Iden Payne Theatre.

Country singer Charlie Daniels begins literary career

By Kathy Kemp
Scottee Howard News Service

It's probably all right to call Charlie Daniels a country music giant, given that he stands well over 6 feet tall and weighs 240 pounds. That's without his 10-gallon hat.

Of course, he also has sold a few million record albums, among them *Million Mile Reflections*, *Fall Moon* and his latest, *Me and the Boys*.

Now he is making a name for himself in literary circles.

"I wasn't sure where I was going with it when I first started writing, or even if I could do it effectively," the long-haired country boy said by telephone from his ranch near Nashville, Tenn.

"I was writing these stories just for my own self. As I got on into it, and got more and more stories done, it became fairly apparent that we'd be publishing them. I'd let people read them, and they'd say



mer afternoon. Relaxed. Real relaxed.

"Basically, there is some truth in each of these stories," the 45-year-old author says. "Little things I heard and seen, things I was raised around. But some are 100 percent true, except the biography."

Daniels is pleased with the reviews, yet he claims he never has placed much stock in what the critics say.

The *Village Voice* magazine and *Rolling Stone* magazine dismissed him as a redneck parrot at *In America*, a song Daniels recorded during the Iranian hostage crisis that was unashamedly pro-American. "This lady may have stumbled, but she ain't never fell, and if the Russians don't believe that, they can all go straight to hell."

Then, in 1982, he was accused of contradicting himself when he recorded Dan Jolley's *Still In Saigon*, a powerful song about the frustra-

tions of a Vietnam veteran: "Every summer when it rains, I smell the jungle, I hear the planes, I can't tell no one, I feel ashamed. Afraid some day I'll go home."

Daniels is both riled and confused by the criticism. "To be honest with you, I don't have a whole lot of respect for those writers," he says of the New York rock critics. "They're supposedly so aesthetic, but usually they don't know anything 's obvious when they write that stuff."

On *Me and the Boys*, his latest LP, Daniels sings about the plight of farmers in *American Farmer*, and in *M.I.A.*, he angrily demands that politicians remember the American soldiers who may still be stranded in Southeast Asia.

Although Daniels plans to continue his literary and acting pursuits in the New York rock critic (he was featured in his first acting role in last month's PBS special, *The Lone Star Kid*), he says music is his first love and top priority.

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