



Courtesy photo

In 'Monsoon Wedding,' Vasundhara Das plays Aditi Verma, a young woman who accepts an arranged marriage; the film's directed by Mira Nair.

# Film captures passion, love

■ 'Monsoon Wedding' looks at the life of a family that lives in India and is preparing for an elaborate, arranged marriage

## MOVIE REVIEW

### 'Monsoon Wedding'

★★★★★

By Ryan Bornheimer  
for the Emerald

Mira Nair's "Monsoon Wedding" has an organic charm that springs up from the screen. It's funny and heartfelt, and there isn't a false note in the whole film.

"Monsoon," which won the top prize at the 2001 Venice Film Festival, follows the Verna family of New Delhi, India, through the days leading up to the youngest daughter's wedding. The movie drops us into the center of the chaos, then withdraws to juggle three main story lines with style and ease.

There's the bride-to-be, Aditi, who's using the arranged marriage as an excuse to escape an ongoing affair with a married man. There's Rahul, a family friend, who falls for the bride's beautiful cousin, Ayesha. There's another cousin, Ria, who hides a dark secret of abuse at the hands of a much-loved uncle, who

she fears may be zeroing in on a younger victim in the family.

The father of the bride is Lalit, a well-meaning man who adores his children but is blind to the larger issues that define their lives. In one scene, Lalit stares down at his sleeping children and wonders where the years went, even as he remains distracted by practical matters of the ceremony such as money and weather.

The most enjoyable story line is that of the wedding planner, P.K. Dubey, a hyperactive young man who finds true love with the Vernas' maid, Alice. The innocent romance puts Hollywood productions like "40 Days and 40 Nights" to shame. When P.K. shows up at the girl's home with a heart made of marigolds, the audience swoons right along with Alice.

The only relationship that may leave some people cold is that of Aditi and the man she is to marry, Hemant. Though it's wonderful how the two begin to truly fall for each other after having met just days before the wedding, it lacks the erotic charge of Rahul and Ayesha's flirtations or the tenderness of P.K. and Alice's budding romance. Perhaps it's no accident that the weakest relationship is between the two people getting married.

The charm of "Monsoon Wedding" lies in its unassuming style. Nair and cinematographer Declan Quinn put us smack in the middle

of the craziness yet maintain fluidity and grace throughout. The action moves along at a dizzying pace, but Nair knows precisely when to linger on the expressive faces of her actors to clue us into the joy or anguish they are feeling.

The way characters drift between many languages, including English, Hindi and Punjabi, is indicative of the movie's knack for crossing cultural boundaries to reach the heart of universal truth. This is not exclusively about Indian culture, nor is it a period piece. The characters represent the struggles that arise when young people try to find a place in the modern world while staying true to ancient traditions. They may take part in age-old rituals, but cell-phones still ring at inappropriate moments.

Ultimately, "Monsoon Wedding" is about taking leaps in life. From the most obvious leap of an arranged marriage to the father who must confront the abusive uncle to the simplicity of Rahul's timidity on the dance floor with Ayesha, all these characters learn to play an active role in their lives. The stories move together so effortlessly and with such colorful zing, it's a reaffirmation of just how enchanting movies can be. So take the leap and go see "Monsoon Wedding," now playing at the Bijou Art Cinemas.

Ryan Bornheimer is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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# Romantic comedy charms audience

■ The Lord Leebrick Theatre is currently featuring Schmor's adaptation of Shakespeare's classic play 'As You Like It'

## PLAY REVIEW

### 'As You Like It'

Lord Leebrick Theatre

★★★★☆

By Jen West

Oregon Daily Emerald

William Shakespeare's use of misguided love and mistaken identities has had audiences laughing for centuries, and continues to tickle funny bones even today.

The Lord Leebrick Theatre Company opened its tenth annual Shakespearean play March 28 with a production of the romantic-comedy "As You Like It," directed by John Schmor.



Courtesy photo

Wayne Bund (left) plays Celia and Lauren Armstrong plays Rosalind in William Shakespeare's play 'As You Like It.' The play will run through April 27 at the Lord Leebrick Theatre.

The LLTC actors came out with a strong performance, but there were only a few surprises or changes made to this oft-played piece.

In this classic tale, the Bad Duke (played by Bary Shaw) has banished his niece, Rosalind (played by Lauren Armstrong) from the city. Rosalind, accompanied by her cousin, Celia (played by Wayne Bund), flees into the forest of Arden. Rosalind disguises herself as a young boy, but when she meets her love, Orlando (played by Noah Smith), she cannot act on her love because she is dressed as a man. So she pretends to be "Rosalind" for Orlando to practice his wooing techniques.

The director has changed the character of Celia from a female role to a male role, adding to the role-playing confusion. In the time of Shakespeare, Celia, a female character, would have been played by a man pretending to be a woman dressed as a man. But in this production, Celia is a male character, played by a man pretending to be a woman. This confusion of the sexes is a central theme to the play and adds to the humor of the situation.

The action in the play affected

the audience more than the actors. A rowdy wrestling match had some front row audience members dodging flying chairs, although no injuries were reported.

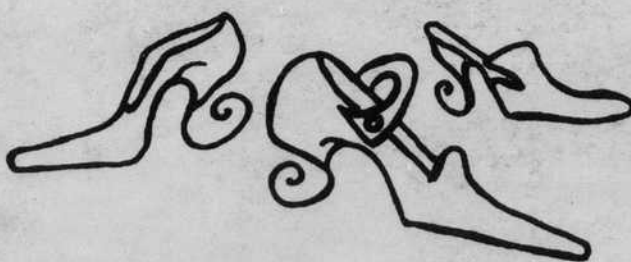
The theater's intimate setting gave the audience a close-up view of every twitching eyebrow and secret glance between the characters — especially those between Rosalind and Celia — making the characters' emotions much more evident.

The surprising gem of the evening's performance came from the page, Amiens (played by Nicole Barrett). Turning her lyre in for a guitar, Amiens filled the small auditorium with a sultry voice that added an element of folk music to the play.

"As You Like It" will continue with performances at 8 p.m. Thursday through Sunday until April 27. There will be no late seating. Tickets are available at the LLTC Box Office. Tickets are \$12 to \$16 for the general public and \$8 for students for Thursday performances.

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