

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

IN THE ANGUS BOWMER THEATRE
THROUGH OCT. 28

Jane Austen fans are legion, and her novel *Sense and Sensibility* is one of their touchstones. The story, set in England in the late 18th century, is about three daughters whose father dies, leaving his entire estate, as the law requires, to their henpecked brother — meaning their only recourse is to find financially feasible marriages.

This adaptation of the novel was done by Kate Hamill, who explains in the program notes that her stage version of the story is 60 percent her and only 40 percent Austen. That’s a good thing, because forcing a 300- to 400-page novel into a two and a half hour performance usually doesn’t work.

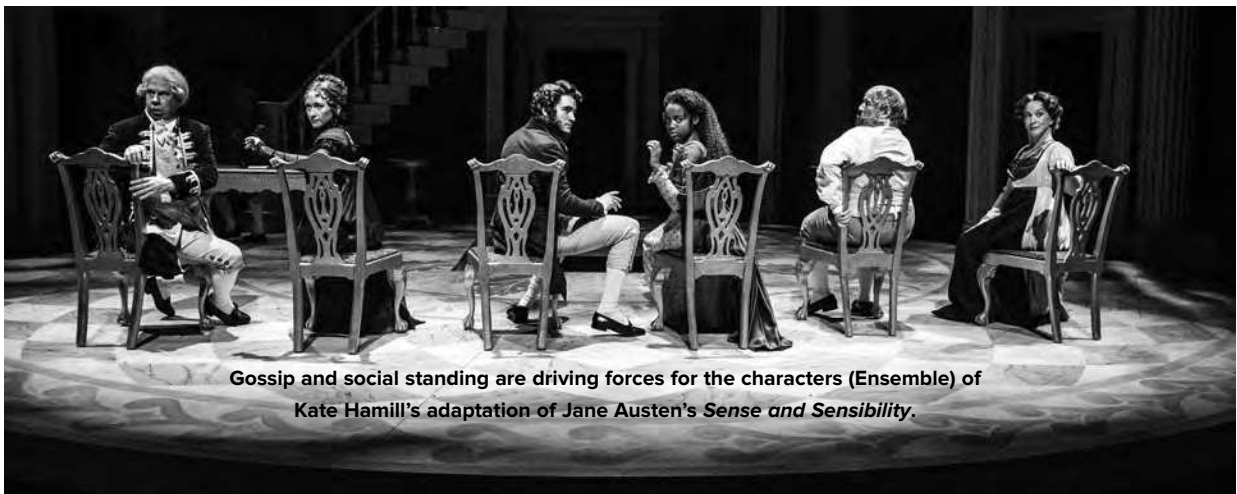
This story works very well. Director Hana S. Sharif stages it in period costume on an elegant set by Collette Pollard. There, the story is hung on the love and competition between sisters Elinor Dashwood (Nancy Rodriguez) and Marianne Dashwood (Emily Ota), who are under the thumb of their mother, Mrs. Dashwood (Kate Mulligan).

I’m not, myself, a huge Austen fan, but the play does offer a fine evening’s entertainment — even for those of us not enthralled by Regency gowns and tea parties. Austen fans will love it even more.

DESTINY OF DESIRE

IN THE ANGUS BOWMER THEATRE
THROUGH JULY 12

The most popular television programming in the world today is not, as you might expect, pro football or Disney-animated musicals. It is, in fact, the *telenovela*, the extended Latin American soap opera that has swept the



Gossip and social standing are driving forces for the characters (Ensemble) of Kate Hamill’s adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*.

globe since its beginnings in radio nearly a century ago.

With their fast-moving plots wrapped around issues of class and race, and featuring plenty of sex, telenovelas now captivate an estimated 2 billion viewers worldwide.

Karen Zacarias’ *Destiny of Desire*, directed here by José Luis Valenzuela, both spoofs and honors the telenovela with its own fast-paced melodrama of two young women switched at birth in a Mexican hospital.

The daughter of a wealthy casino owner is born sickly and dying of a bad heart; the pale baby is swapped by hospital staff with the healthy daughter of peasants, so as not to offend the rich man.

Our story really begins 18 years later, when Victoria Maria del Rio (Ella Saldana North) has grown up to work as a maid to the rich girl, Pilar Esperanza Castillo (Esperanza America). This Dickensian plot turns rapidly into pure farce, as insanely complicated love affairs (at one point near the end, the piano player accompanying the show throws up his hands in exasperation) and revelations ensue.

That pale plot summary does little justice, though, to the immense and funny energy of this play, which is at once a successful melodrama, whose plot moves faster

than a speeding bullet; a great musical comedy, with lots of triple-threat singing, dancing and acting; and a sophisticated reflection on the increasing prominence of Latin culture in the United States.

The latter is brought in, a bit awkwardly in places, by the device of having characters suddenly stop and narrate odd facts and statistics about everything from the life expectancy of Latinos in the U.S. (better than you probably thought) to how many married American women say they would have an affair if they knew they wouldn’t get caught.

Program notes explain this as giving the audience a “Brechtian” distance from the overwhelming involvement of the telenovela-style plot. OK. It works, but too often it feels like a puritanical attempt to turn great fun into education.

Never mind. This is a hilarious, uplifting and engaging show, start to finish, and you’d better buy tickets now if you plan to see it anytime soon. ■

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival produces 11 plays on its three stages in downtown Ashland during a season that runs through the end of October. For tickets and more information, visit osfashland.org.

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EVENTS FOR MARCH 2018

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FR 02	First Friday OPEN HOUSE [5:30P—6:30P] FREE
	Music by Allan Vance Trio • Christoph Greiner • Paul Slate
FR 02	Hot Club of Eugene Quartet: Swinging acoustic string band ... flavors of the '30s and '40s
SA 03	The Octet with saxophonist Roger Woods
WE07	A3 Music of Mingus w/ Todd Sickafoose : Instrumental ensemble with emphasis on jazz \$8
TH 08	Hettwer & Radsliff Quartet: Guitarist Jack Radsliff with Saxophonist Josh Hettwer and others
FR 09	UO Jazz Combos with Ryan Meagher [5:00PM to 6:30PM] preview FREE
	[7:30PM Concert \$10 / \$8] OJE end of tour performance
SA 10	Frank Kohl and John Stowell ; A night of guitar magic
WE14	Event Horizon— Chris Caselli : Fusion quintet explores fusing the musical genres of jazz, hip hop, and funk through a contemporary lens
FR 16	The Originators: Several founders of The Jazz Station reunite for old times sake and great music!
	John Crider, Nancy Hamilton, Chris Orsinger, Hamilton Mays, Rich Platz, and Fred Wesley
TH 17	Bossanaire [\$15 / \$11] Traditional Bossa Nova
SA 24	Portland Jazz Series presents Kerry Politzer [\$15 / \$11] Upbeat Brazilian jazz tunes
TH 29	Joanne Broh Band: High energy and soulful blues at it's very best!
SA 31	Smokin' Jukebox: APRIL FOOL'S DAY EVE PARTY! Fun and foolish ditties from the 1920s - 50s with vocalists Dona Clarke & Arlene Schwartz

Sunday Learners Jams 2:30-5:00P

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