

ON TOUR

ACT Productions Ltd, 20 - 22 Stukeley Street, London WC2B 5LR

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH - 12 / 6 / 06 CONT...



ALASTAIR MUIR

Animal passion: PR Jijoy as Oberon in a magical, multi-lingual production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

moments in a show that begins with magical ritual, as the actor playing Puck runs his fingers over a holy stone to release the play's energies.

This is also a fantastically sexy *Dream*, and if the production has an overriding theme, it is the animal passion that lurks beneath superficial decorum. Oberon and Titania (the same actors double as the more buttoned-up Theseus and Hippolyta) roll around in the red earth that covers the stage with a mixture of lust and anger as they quarrel over the Indian boy.

The magical love potion turns Demetrius and Lysander into potential rapists as they

both find themselves lusting after Shanaya Razaat's terrified, wide-eyed Helena. And even Bottom becomes a very sexed-up donkey indeed, rejoicing in the size of his private parts, hilariously represented by a dangling aubergine.

The energy this ensemble generates is extraordinary. Everyone on stage seems to be living fully in each moment of the play, and speech is accompanied by eloquent dance, spectacular aerial tricks and Indian music that ravishingly conjures the different moods of the drama.

Archana Ramaswamy makes a sensationally alluring Titania who moves

with astonishing grace. Joy Fernandes is an irresistibly fat, bumptious and good-natured Bottom, while Ajay Kumar brings a wicked edge of malice to the proceedings as Puck. The evening also owes a great part of its success to Sumant Jayakrishnan's stunning set and costume designs, but there are no weak links in this dazzling and delightful show.

This co-production between Dash Arts and the British Council only plays at the Swan until June 17. Its prompt return to Britain for a longer run must be a matter of urgency.

Tickets: 0870 609 1110

rchapman@ontour.org.uk

020 7438 9558 (tel) 07831 463 993 (mobile) 020 7242 3548 (fax) VAT No. 681 5527 19