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Starring — LAURENCE OLIVIER and ELISABETH BERGNER — 1936

One of Shakespeare's best comedies, AS YOU LIKE IT has also been one of the most adapted of his works. In 1973 Joseph Papp presented a production of it set in the turn-of-the-century America on television.

Sir James Barrie's adaptation, while consistent in time and place with Shakespeare's, departs from the original in the somewhat whimsical characterizations, particularly noticeable in Rosalind. Elisabeth Bergner in the title role starts out as a shy, gentle young maiden, wide eyed and breathlessly eager but when she is banished and assumes the guise of a young man, not only her costume changes but also her entire personality and we see a Rosalind/Ganymede slightly smacking of a "grounded" Peter Pan. Flying or not, she is every bit as delightful and capricious as Barrie's boy "who wouldn't grow up." The sheer energy of her Rosalind is certainly equal to the vigor with which Olivier portrays Orlando. This somewhat maudlin youth, carving the name of his ladylove on trees, tables and, one suspects, even his bar of soap, is saved from dissolving into a saccharine blab of love "sighing like a furnace" by the glorious vibrancy emanating from the magnificent twenty-eight year old Lawrence Olivier.

Olivier's splendid voice and supple grace of action do full justice to Shakespeare's poetry, and in his Orlando, we are treated to a performance by one whose consummate artistry was already recognized in 1937.

In addition to the fine acting of the two principals and supporting cast, credit for a fast paced and joyous production must be given to the director, Paul Czinner and the film editor, David Lean, who would later become a famous director. Songs and music performed by members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra are an added enhancement to the film called "thoroughly delightful!" by the New York Times, and one which the Motion Picture Department of Columbia University said "... demonstrates the happy wedding of 16th Century drama and 20th Century invention."

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 BRITISH FILM



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