

**CYMBELINE**

**10 – 14 October 2006**

**PRESS**

**WEST YORKSHIRE  
PLAYHOUSE**

**PLAYHOUSE SQUARE  
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SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION:  
DATE:

CYMBELINE  
WAKEFIELD EXTRA  
26 OCTOBER 2006

# Bard, with a bit of rap thrown in

Cymbeline  
West Yorkshire  
Playhouse

KNEEHIGH Theatre has taken a well-constructed Shakespearian tale, and created an excellent modern interpretation. It is both true to its source, and thoroughly engaging to a contemporary audience.

They use simple devices, and use them with disarming skill; and their penchant for physical theatre and circus does not prevent them from grappling with serious issues of authority and growth.

King Cymbeline gets a rough deal. His wife has died in childbirth, his sons have been kidnapped, and his daughter goes off with an unsuitable bloke. Marrying his scheming nurse completes the elements for a perfectly dysfunctional family. But ultimately the play tells the story of the next generation, who develop honesty and loyalty to neutralise their father's ignorance – they earn a clean slate. A mental family reclaims its history and finds a way to make a home, and in the end Cymbeline allows his children to supersede his authority.

Writer Carl Grose has done a wonderful job. His

language maintains a Shakespearian flavour, but incorporates rap and TV to achieve a thoroughly accessible feel.

The construction is commercially astute – the first act is winningly funny, the second act is satisfyingly serious. The staging nicely balances the simple (puppetry and hand-held lights) with the technical (terrifying explosions and flashes). And the live music is a treat, even if the highly visible musicians are distracting at times.

Relationships are well portrayed. The love between Imogen (Hayley Carmichael) and Posthumus (Carl Grose) is utterly convincing, and is the key to the play's success.

I have to admit that I started the evening from a position of prejudice. Kneehigh's previous production, *Tristan And Yseult*, felt small and under-skilled. But *Cymbeline* really won me over. The writing and projection steps out of the village hall, and impressively captures the massive space of the Quarry Theatre.

DAVE BOWIE

SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION:  
DATE.

CYMBELINE  
WAKEFIELD EXPRESS  
20 OCTOBER 2006

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**DAVE BOWIE**

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# Kneehigh to a stormer

Cymbeline at West Yorkshire Playhouse

THE KNEEHIGH Theatre group must long for the sort of reception they get at the West Yorkshire Playhouse everywhere they go.

Near sell-out crowds and rapturous applause – not to mention laughter – greeted their new production, *Cymbeline*.

They've built up a fanbase because of their highly original take on classic stories and plays, with *Nights at the Circus* and *Tristan and Yseult* also finding recent success.

The play is loosely based on Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Cymbeline, King of Britain*, and Kneehigh definitely draw out the humour in the Bard's overblown tragedy.

For those unfamiliar with one of Shakespeare's least fashionable plays, the outline of how it all begins is reasonably simple.

Cymbeline is a king and his only daughter Imogen has married against his wishes. He has banished her new husband Posthumus.

Cymbeline's second wife is wicked and so is her son Cloten, who has designs on Imogen himself.

And the king's two young sons were also kidnapped at some point before the play begins.

All these elements are thrown together with a war between Rome and Britain to produce a

massively convoluted plot. And while the company make pains to say their version of the story is freely adapted, they really don't need to.

Their *Cymbeline* has the instantly recognisable structure, themes and frustrations of a Shakespeare story but everything in it is distinctly Kneehigh. They mix the best and most eloquent verse from the play with their own humour and live music to vibrant effect.

*Cymbeline* is an excellent example of how to draw out the best of Shakespeare and create an adaptation that becomes something in itself.

But it wouldn't hold up without the acting which has the kind of ragged energy that befits this kind of production.

Multiple costume changes and characters mean that the small cast have their work cut out.

Yet they all go about it with a smile and the kind of carefree and relaxed acting that defies the audience not to smile and laugh with them.

The only minor criticism is the play's length. Despite having tongue firmly planted in cheek throughout, *Cymbeline* still remains an epic.

*Cymbeline* now continues to tour the country.

**JOEL TURNER**

SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION:  
DATE:

CYMBELINE  
YORKSHIRE EVENING POST  
19 OCTOBER 2006

# Making sense of a shambles

## review

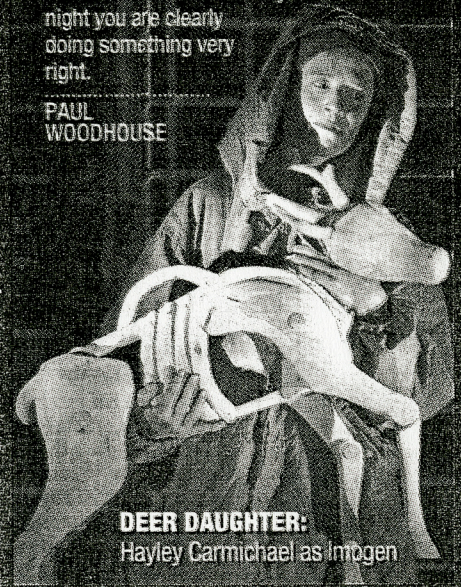
**CYMBELINE**  
WEST YORKSHIRE PLAYHOUSE

WHEN the Royal Shakespeare Company embarked on their year-long project to stage all of the Bard's works, they must have wondered what to do with dear Bill's sprawling mess-terpiece *Cymbeline*. Its shambles of a plot, seemingly made up of bits from nearly all of his other plays, has led it to be acknowledged as a problem work, and one that rarely – many would say rightly – sees the light of day. But storytelling, no matter how tricky the tale, is what Kneehigh do best, and they accepted the challenge. Their visits to Leeds in recent years have seen them build up an avid following with their daring, no-holds-barred productions. And their treatment of Shakespeare is no exception, so anyone looking forward to an evening of elegantly-delivered iambic pentameters was

in for a rude shock. The audience is treated to Kneehigh's full armoury of theatrical trickery. A huge metal cage of a set is both the prison of King Cymbeline's gloomy castle, and also a climbing frame on which the cast scramble and cavort. It also houses the band, who provide an almost constant soundtrack with musical director Stu Barker conjuring a huge array of styles and sounds from just four musicians. The strengths of Kneehigh's style is their ability to distil moments of inventive magic from a script and there were several of these. Most telling was when Cymbeline's daughter Imogen (Hayley Carmichael) in one of the plot's more convoluted twists believes she has woken next to the headless body of her lover. Her line "Where's his head?" was first hilarious, on second delivery disturbing, and thirdly, tragically chilling. The introduction of a panto dame-style character to help the audience through the story was to my taste

a gag too far, but that was a minor quibble. When you have a packed, largely young, house on a wet Wednesday night you are clearly doing something very right.

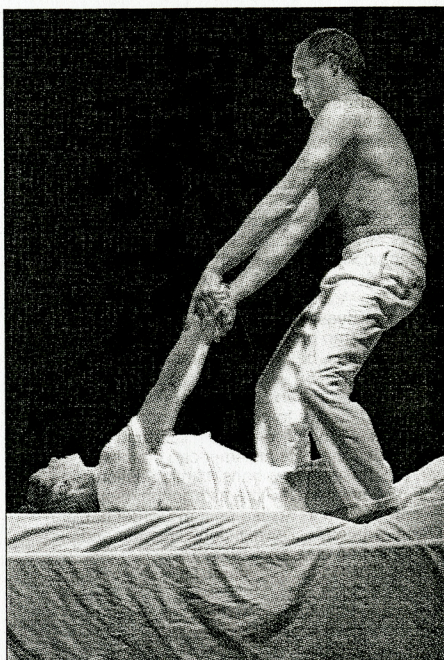
PAUL  
WOODHOUSE



**DEER DAUGHTER:**  
Hayley Carmichael as Imogen

SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION  
DATE

CYMBELINE  
PATELEY BRIDGE & WIDDERDALE HERALD  
13 OCTOBER 2006



**A scene from Kneehigh Theatre's performance of Shakespeare's Cymbeline. (S)**

## *Rare Shakespeare on at Playhouse*

WILLIAM Shakespeare's Cymbeline plays tonight and tomorrow at the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

Following the first ever stage version of Angela Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* and the sell-out success of *Tristan and Yseult*, the wonderfully inventive Kneehigh Theatre return to West Yorkshire Playhouse with the rarely performed Cymbeline for their first adaptation of a Shakespeare play.

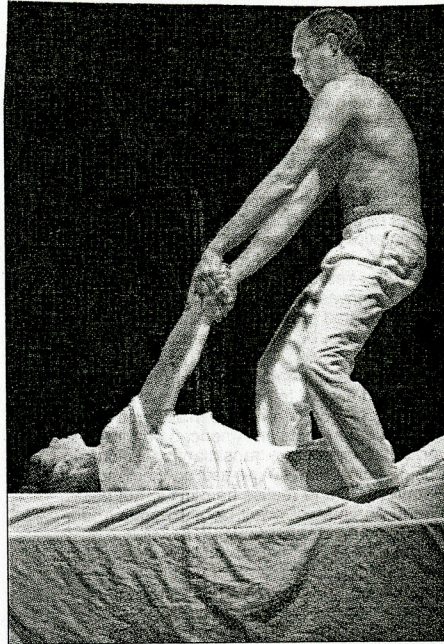
Imogen, daughter of Cymbeline King of Britain, has married against his wishes. With her husband banished, secrets, plots, bets and disguises make for a plot as complicated as any Shakespeare play should be.

With Kneehigh's usual irreverence they dance through misunderstandings, intimacies, betrayals and battles with heart-stopping poetry, electrifying live music and characteristic madness.

Cymbeline runs at 7.30pm tonight and tomorrow, with a 2pm matinee tomorrow. Tickets are £11 £26.50 (concessions available) from the box office on 0113 213 7700 or online at [www.wyp.org.uk](http://www.wyp.org.uk)

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CYMBELINE  
KNARESBOROUGH POST  
13 OCTOBER 2006



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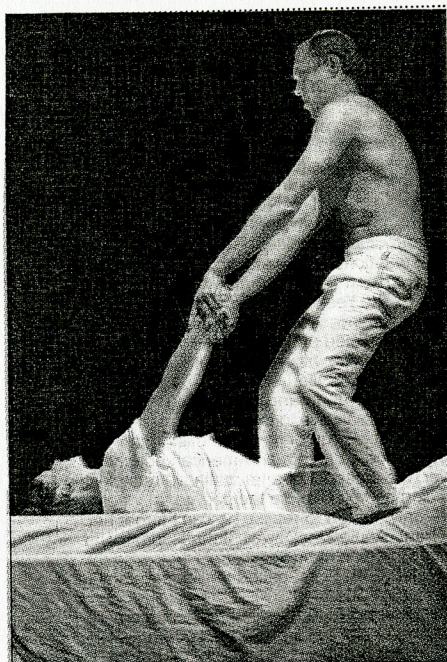
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SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION  
DATE:

CYMBELINE  
HARROGATE ADVISER  
13 OCTOBER 2006



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SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION.  
DATE:

CYMBELINE  
THE WEST BRITAIN  
12 OCTOBER 2006

## KNEEHIGH'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR SHORTLISTED IN WOMAN OF THE YEAR



■ Emma Rice, who has been invited to a Woman of the Year lunch on Monday.

By CAROLYN THOMAS

cthomas@c-dm.co.uk

EMMA Rice, the artistic director for Kneehigh Theatre, has been invited to a prestigious Woman of the Year 2006 lunch in London on Monday.

Emma, aged 39, has been short-listed for an award and will join dozens of other women at the special ceremony.

"I'm really excited about it because I'm hoping to meet some fantastic women. The president is Joan Armatrading so it would be great to chat to her," said Emma.

Emma has been selected by a council of more than 40 well-known women.

"I'm not sure how they choose the people to attend but it is lovely to wake up and to know someone thinks I've achieved something."

Having been brought up in Nottingham, Emma attended the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

In 1994 she moved to Cornwall to join Kneehigh, landing a small part in one of their productions. From there she has never looked back.

"I fell in love with the circus and ran away," said Emma who now lives in Gorrnan Haven.

The *West Briton* caught up with Emma while at the Yorkshire Playhouse where the current Kneehigh production *Cymbeline* is playing this week.

Emma is full of praise for the

theatre company which, she says, has given her tremendous opportunities: "I started with them as an actress but through working with them I started directing and now write as well."

From its long-standing Cornish roots Kneehigh now tours nationally and internationally to high acclaim and has won many awards.

Asked whether she has a favourite production Emma replied: "I love them all. But *Tristan and Yseult* has to stand out as we toured around the world with it in Australia, New Zealand and America."

In the meantime Emma is relishing the controversy their production of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is causing. "It caused a stir at the RSC when we played in Stratford. There were a few very angry people."

Emma said there are many exciting and ambitious projects planned in the future.

"I am totally committed to this company and we have a big commission with the National Theatre coming up. I'm booked up until 2008."

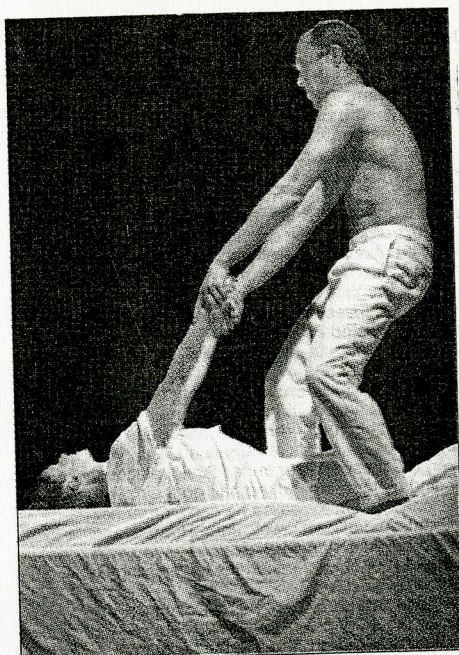
She is more than happy, however, to take time out from her busy schedule to attend the Woman of the Year lunch.

"It should be a swanky event, I can't wait."

Previous winners have included Tina Turner and Margaret Thatcher.

SUBJECT:  
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CYMBELINE  
TOWER HAMLETS RECORDER  
11 OCTOBER 2006



A scene from Kneehigh Theatre's performance of Shakespeare's Cymbeline. (S)

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SUBJECT  
PUBLICATION  
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CYMBELINE  
INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY  
8 OCTOBER 2006

## THEATRE

- 1 **'THE SEAFARER'**  
Conor McPherson's hilarious new play about drunks and the devil playing poker. With Jim Norton, Conleth Hill, Ron Cook. NT Cottesloe, London (020 7452 3000) to 11 Jan
- 2 **'A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN'**  
Kevin Spacey and Eve Best on top form as would-be lovers in Eugene O'Neill's sequel to *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Old Vic, London (0870 060 6628) to 23 Dec
- 3 **'CYMBELINE'**  
Kneehigh's jubilantly free adaptation of the Bard's late romance, touring from Stratford with Hayley Carmichael. West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds (0113 213 7700) to 10 to 14 Oct
- 4 **'THE LIFE OF GALILEO'**  
Simon Russell Beale is superb as Brecht's scientist compromised by political and religious pressures. NT Olivier London (020 7452 3000) to 30 Oct
- 5 **'TOM AND VIV'**  
Will Keen and Frances O'Connor as a pained, uptight TS Eliot and his coltish, tragically unbalanced wife. Almeida, London (020 7359 4404) to 4 Nov

SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION  
DATE.

CYMBELINE  
TIMES. THE KNOWLEDGE  
7 OCTOBER 2006

## TOP FIVE THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale



**1 CYMBELINE**  
Kneehigh Theatre presents its controversial version of Shakespeare's late romance. West Yorkshire Playhouse, Playhouse Square, Leeds ([www.wyplayhouse.com](http://www.wyplayhouse.com) 0113-213 7700), from Tues, until Oct 14

**2 THE HISTORY BOYS**  
Alan Bennett's hugely successful comedy. New Theatre, Kingston Square, Hull ([www.hullcc.gov.uk/hullnewtheatre](http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/hullnewtheatre) 01482 226655), from Tues, until Oct 14

**3 POOL (NO WATER)**  
Mark Ravenhill's play about the eccentric treatment formulated by the friends of a coma victim. Everyman Theatre, Hope Street, Liverpool ([www.everymanplayhouse.com](http://www.everymanplayhouse.com) 0151-709 4776), from Tues, until Oct 14

**4 SING YER HEART OUT FOR THE LADS**  
The nation's obsession with football, race and patriotism. Playhouse, Wellington Circus, Nottingham ([www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk](http://www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk) 0115-941 9419), from Tues, until Oct 14

**5 MARY BARTON**  
Mrs Gaskell's tale of love, revenge and unrest in mill-era Manchester. Royal Exchange Theatre, St Ann's Square, Manchester ([www.royalexchange.co.uk](http://www.royalexchange.co.uk) 0161-833 9833), until Oct 14  
**For more theatre, go to [timesonline.co.uk/theknowledge/theatre](http://timesonline.co.uk/theknowledge/theatre)**

SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION  
DATE.

CYMBELINE  
TELEGRAPH & ARGUS  
6 OCTOBER 2006

## Choral

# Irreverent take on the Bard's complex play

■ *Cymbeline* at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds

Kneehigh Theatre returns to the West Yorkshire Playhouse after its acclaimed production of *Nights at the Circus* earlier this year.

This time the inventive theatre company has teamed up with the Royal Shakespeare Company to perform *Cymbeline*.

The rarely-performed play centres on Imogen, daughter of *Cymbeline*, the King of Britain. With her husband banished, secrets, plots, bets and disguises make for a plot as complicated as any Shakespeare play should be.

With Kneehigh's usual irreverence, the characters dance through misunderstandings, intimacies, betrayals and battles with heart-stopping poetry, electrifying live music and characteristic madness.

● *Cymbeline* runs at the West Yorkshire Playhouse from Tuesday to next Saturday. For tickets ring (0113) 213 7700.

SUBJECT  
PUBLICATION:  
DATE

CYMBELINE  
GUARDIAN' THE GUIDE  
7 OCTOBER 2006

*Leeds*

● **Cymbeline**

West Yorkshire Playhouse:  
Quarry Theatre, Playhouse  
Square (0113-213 7700)  
Tue-Fri 7.30pm, mat Thu  
1.30pm, to Oct 14, £11  
£26.50, concs available.  
[WA]

● **How Many Miles To Basra?**

West Yorkshire Playhouse:  
Courtyard Theatre,  
Playhouse Square (0113-  
213 7700) Sat & Mon-Fri  
7.45pm, mats Sat 2.30pm,  
to Oct 21, £11-£22, concs  
available. [WA]

● **To Kill A Mockingbird**

West Yorkshire Playhouse:  
Quarry Theatre, Playhouse  
Square (0113-213 7700)  
2pm & 7.30pm, to  
Oct 7 £11-£26.50, concs  
available. [WA].

SUBJECT:  
PUBLICATION:  
DATE:

CYMBELINE  
MOORTOWN, ROUNDHAY & ALWOODLEY WEEKLY NEWS  
5 OCTOBER 2006

## A story of conflict

SHAKESPEARE'S lesser-known work The Tragedy of Cymbeline, King of Britain inspires a production at the West Yorkshire Playhouse this week.

The play is jointly produced by the Kneehigh Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company and tells the

story of King Cymbeline and the conflict within his family.

It runs from Tuesday until Saturday with nightly performances at 7.30pm and matinees on Thursday at 1.30pm and on Saturday at 2pm.

Tickets are from £11 to £26.50 and available from the Box Office on Leeds 2137700.

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CYMBELINE  
EAST LEEDS WEEKLY NEWS  
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# Play gets rare airing

ACCLAIMED Cornwall based theatre company, Kneehigh Theatre, has turned its attention to Shakespeare for the first time as part of the RSC's Complete Works Festival.

Kneehigh will tackle Cymbeline, one of Shakespeare's least known and most rarely performed plays, with their typically lively and unconventional approach to theatre-making. Artistic Director, Emma Rice and

regular Kneehigh collaborator Carl Grose, have worked with Shakespeare's play to produce an innovative and freely adapted text based on the original.

Kneehigh Theatre is well-known for putting on outdoor productions, working with the elements and using a physical language that replaces the need to rely on the spoken word.

Renowned for its physical and vivid style of story-telling, the company has integrated music

and heart-stopping poetry into its version of Cymbeline, to create a witty and contemporary take on Shakespeare's tale.

The cast which includes both Emma Rice (Queen) and Carl Grose (Posthumus), also includes Hayley Carmichael as Imogen; Craig Johnson as Cloten, Robert Lukay as Iachimo; Mike Shepherd as Cymbeline and Kirsty Woodward as Pisanio.

The production, which opened to audiences in Nottingham and

Cornwall in August, is now playing in Stratford until September 30 at the Swan Theatre.

After this, the production will go on a major national tour including Northern Stage; West Yorkshire Playhouse; Bristol Old Vic; Hall for Cornwall, Lyric Hammersmith and Birmingham Rep.

For tickets during its Stratford run, contact the RSC Ticket Hotline, which is 0870 609 1110.

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CYMBELINE  
WESTERN MORNING MAIL  
22 AUGUST 2006

# When action speaks louder than words

STEVE TANNER

Kneehigh Theatre are staging their first Shakespeare play as part of a year-long worldwide celebration of the master playwright. **Simon Parker** saw one of the opening performances at Restormel Castle

**C**AST your mind back to the school playground, where a scruffy bunch of lads are waiting to be sorted into two teams by self-appointed captains ahead of a kickabout. The star strikers go first, followed by a few dependable midfielders and solid defenders, until all that is left is the fat kid with two left feet. No one wants him.

Those top goalscorers might, for argument's sake, be called Macbeth and Hamlet, while the reliable back line could be Othello, Richard and Julius. The fat kid's name is Cymbeline.

Kneehigh didn't pick Cymbeline, he was chosen for them their only decision in the matter being to run with it or walk off the pitch. Kneehigh's director, Mike Shepherd, said he wasn't in a position to quibble over the selection of the play but he regarded it as honour enough (though most would say richly deserved) that The Royal Shakespeare Company should invite the company he formed to join a cast of the world's top theatre companies to take part in The Complete Works, a year-long celebration of Shakespeare's every play and sonnet.

Cymbeline is a tall order – even for the inventive talents of Kneehigh's award-winning team of actors, designers, directors, composers and makers. If you believe the assessment of scholars and critics, this clunky tale of a king, his daughter, a malicious stepmother, and two missing children set against the backdrop of a Roman invasion of Britain is one of Shakespeare's "most difficult" plays and the reason why it is so rarely performed.

Having only dipped into the original text and read a brief synopsis, it is impossible to comment on this critique with any degree of authority. The plot is clear enough – if a little barmy – but the playwright's intent is unclear. However, Shakespeare's genius lay not in plot but language, and as this was Kneehigh's first stab at his work, many might have been keenly anticipating the likely alchemy resulting from the marriage of two masters of their art: Stratford's William Shakespeare and Cornwall's Kneehigh Theatre.

A late play, completed after King Lear and Macbeth but before The Tempest and Henry VIII, Cymbeline is a complete conundrum. A tragedy in name only, it bears little resemblance to the blood-bathed horror of, say, Coriolanus. In short, it is a tragedy crying out for comedy – and perhaps that was Shakespeare's real intent. If so – and it is nothing more than idle speculation – then Kneehigh's decision to inject some humour into the piece was the right one and may have inadvertently revealed the work's true motives.

Kneehigh have clearly walked a tightrope between staying true to the intentions of The Complete Works project and staying true to themselves. This they achieve by sticking to the narrative but being free with the text. Some of

Shakespeare's words are there for those who care to look, but for the most part the reworking has been done by Carl Grose, who has also written song lyrics and takes the part of Posthumus, a wholly serious role which he handles with absolute sincerity and skill.

Shakespeare purists whatever that may mean may find much to criticise with this version of Cymbeline. But Shakespeare's canon was created for interpretation, deviation and, above all, entertainment. Consequently, Kneehigh follows a great tradition of getting to the guts of a play by making Cymbeline their own. And it is a feather in their cap that a play which would have been a dead duck in the hands of a lesser theatre company has emerged as a noisy, colourful, flamboyant peacock, strutting and squawking and generally making a nuisance of itself. It will enthral and delight audiences wherever it plays, both in Cornwall, across the UK – and perhaps the world.

Kneehigh's Cymbeline is richly layered, weaving countless elements and experiences into an energetic, fast-paced performance which spans high art to slapstick over two and a quarter hours. The set, a high steel cage, provides, in effect, two stages, enabling more than one story to unfold simultaneously.

There may be a few too many thrusting male hips for some tastes, but one member of the audience said afterwards that her abiding image of the play was "Iachimo's hot naked torso" emerging from a trunk into Imogen's bedroom. And for those with different predilections, there is Joan Puttock, played by Mike Shepherd – who also takes the role of King Cymbeline himself. Joan is a solid Cornish lush with insatiable appetites, who "scampered" off to the Costa del Sol and has returned after 20 years to catch up on local gossip in the court of Cymbeline. This device neatly allows her to furnish the audience with "the story so far" thus cleverly avoiding a tedious narration.

Joan succinctly informs us that the king's wife died from a broken heart

## On form, in action, and going at full tilt, Kneehigh's performers are a wonder to behold

after their two children were stolen, that the king then marries a manipulating witch of a woman with a lascivious son, who fancies the king's daughter, Imogen. Keep up! But Imogen loves Posthumus, of whom the king does not approve, and he is banished, washing up in Italy, where he meets a pimp called Iachimo, with a gaggle of whores, who bets Posthumus that he can woo the



● **SETTING SAIL:** Carl Grose as Posthumus in a scene from Cymbeline at Restormel Castle

lovely Imogen. Phew! Iachimo duly sails for Britain in order to trick Imogen into bed and while there Imogen's maid, Pisanio, falls for Iachimo and because he pays her no heed Pisanio begins to harbour ill thoughts for Imogen. That's enough – go and see it for yourself.

On form, in action, and going at full tilt, Kneehigh's performers are a wonder to behold and a triumph of choreography. The battle scene in particular, played out across a giant board-game and over a network of vertical steel bars, is like watching a cageful of monkeys suddenly given the gift of intelligent purpose.

Bristol-based band, Gentlemen Rebels.

For Cornish fans, who have followed Kneehigh since its formation in 1980, there is always a feeling of intense excitement tinged with slight trepidation at the opening of any new production; this is their team and they want a home win. These aficionados carry an awful lot of baggage to each new show, stuffed with unforgettable moments and experiences. They long for another magnificent triumph along the lines of Tristan And Iseult, The King Of Prussia, Ship Of Fools, The Itch, Fish Boy and Wolf, to name but a few. Thankfully, in Cymbeline their loyalty is yet again rewarded.

With Hayley Carmichael as Imogen, Carl Grose as Posthumus, Dominic Lawton as Brother, Mike Shepherd as Cymbeline, Robert Luckay as Iachimo, Emma Rice as The Queen, Craig Johnson as Cloten, Kirsty Woodward as Pisanio, and music by Stu Barker, Pete Judge, Dominic Lawton and Alex Vann, this is theatre on a grand scale, a spectacular feast of a show.

Cymbeline continues at Restormel Castle, Lostwithiel, until September 3. It then moves to The Swan, Stratford-upon-Avon (September 20-30), Northern Stage, Newcastle (October 3-7), West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds (October 10-14), Bristol Old Vic (October 17-21), before returning home to the Hall for Cornwall, Truro (October 24-28).

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# Theatre's coming home - it's coming

STEVE TANNER

**F**OOTBALL and theatre would, at first, appear to have few similarities. Theatre, since its invention in the ancient Greek city of Epidauros, continues to change, adapt, innovate and entertain, as well as helping us to better understand the human condition. And football? Well, they're still content with trying to batter that old bladder between the posts.

However, when it comes to support, there are definite parallels. Cornwall's Kneehigh Theatre enjoys a following akin to Manchester United on its home turf and it seems they now have avid supporters all over the world. At productions earlier this year, audience members like their football-supporting counterparts - displayed an equally passionate allegiance by actually waving St Piran's flags from the auditorium.

Kneehigh, who are credited by many with reviving modern theatre in Cornwall, spent the first few months of 2006 taking their award-winning production of *Tristan And Iseult* to Australia, New Zealand and the US.

Kneehigh founder Mike Shepherd, who directed and appeared in the play based on an ancient Cornish story, said: "Tristan And Iseult sold out in Australia,

## SIMON PARKER

The seating has been constructed by a team of makers working at Gorran as part of the set for their latest production. Next week they open in Restormel Castle at Lostwithiel for a three-week run of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, as part of The Complete Works, the Royal Shakespeare Company's year-long celebration of the world's greatest playwright. *Cymbeline* is, remarkably, the first work of Shakespeare that Kneehigh has ever tackled. The company's involvement came about when acclaimed RSC director Mike Boyd saw *Tristan And Iseult* in Birmingham. Afterwards he said: "If I could, I'd hire the whole of Kneehigh and keep them prisoner at Stratford for three years."

Members of the cast and crew attended an extravagant launch of The Complete Works, at which paper boats lit with candles were floated down the River Avon. Mike Shepherd said: "It's a privilege to be asked to take part in this by the RSC - and it's a privilege to be making it and performing it in Cornwall."

Kneehigh's version of *Cymbeline* is directed and adapted by Emma Rice, with additional writing by Carl Grose. *Cymbeline* is a king. His only daughter

It's a privilege to be asked to take part in this by the RSC - and it's a privilege to be making it and performing it in Cornwall

New Zealand and America, and everywhere we went we were greeted by Cornish people. We played Sydney for seven weeks and people were seeking us out and telling us that they or their ancestors were originally from Fowey or Ponsanooth or Callington or wherever. Some audiences even waved Cornish flags."

Mike, who has been with the company since it began, insists that Kneehigh remains committed to its Cornish roots, and says he is saddened when he hears there are some who regard these international tours as somehow taking the company away from their original, loyal audiences.

"I feel really proud that we have taken this Cornish story across the world," he said. "I feel as though the people in those countries were charmed by Cornish storytelling. When we returned to Cornwall we felt like we had been flying the flag for Cornwall across the world - but it is sometimes hard convincing people that we are still committed to Cornwall."

To this end, the company has used the proceeds of the tour to develop its base at Gorran, improving rehearsal space and accommodation, and building a huge transportable seating rig which will be available to other Cornish theatre companies and community groups.

Imogen has married against his wishes and he has banished her new husband, Posthumus, from Court. *Cymbeline*'s second wife is simply wicked, as is her son Cloten who wishes that he had married Imogen. And to complicate things further, *Cymbeline* had two sons who were kidnapped at birth. Invasions, misunderstandings, intimacies and betrayals ensue. Mike Shepherd will be joined on stage by Emma Rice, Carl Grose, Hayley Carmichael, Robert Luckay and Craig Johnson, and there will be live music under the direction of Stu Barker.

While they may not be so blatant as to wave flags, those Kneehigh fans gathering at Restormel Castle over the next few weeks will, in their hearts, be hoping their team plays a blinder.

*Cymbeline* can be seen at Restormel Castle from August 16 to September 3. Tickets are available by calling 01872 262466. They are already selling fast as this is the only opportunity to see the show outdoors in Cornwall this year. After Restormel, *Cymbeline* will transfer to the Swan Theatre in Stratford, Northern Stage in Newcastle-on-Tyne, West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds, Bristol Old Vic and finally the Hall for Cornwall in Truro from October 24 to 28.

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● VIVID: A scene from Kneehigh's production of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*