

One membership. So many options.

Come play with us.

\$15 Drop-In Fees for All Classes June, July, August

Adult & children's classes offered side by side.



601 E 4th St Reno, NV 89512 • 775.357.9573

www.acroenso.com



ART OF THE STATE

BY JESSICA SANTINA



Kate Hamill's modernized *Sense and Sensibility* is now playing at Reno Little Theater.
PHOTO/ERIC MARKS

Novel approach

Maybe it's just me, but in the sea of superhero-themed, teenaged-boy-fantasy-inducing summer blockbusters, I crave a quiet puddle of civilized, romantic tales for women featuring the drama of realistic relationships and emotions instead of overblown disaster and destruction.

Perhaps this is why Jane Austen has such universal and long-lasting appeal. Even 200 years after they were written, her stories of human connection and feeling never feel outdated. The problem, however, is that her language often does.

Enter Kate Hamill's *Sense and Sensibility*, a modernized, theatrical retelling of Austen's 1811 novel that captures all the original scandal, gossip, devastation and romantic ecstasy of the original but with modern touches that tighten the language, ramp up the humor and cut to the chase. The result is currently on stage at Reno Little Theater, ready to delight any Austen fan, from fair to fervent.

The lights come up on the cast donning Greek-style dramatic masks to represent anonymous townsfolk, doing as they've done since ancient times—gossiping. Mr. Henry Dashwood has died, leaving his estate, as was the custom at the time, to his only son John (played by Caulder Temple)—but not before extracting a promise that John take care of his three younger half-sister sisters, Elinor (Tara Rispin), Marianne (Elise Van Dyne) and Margaret (Reese Kväll), who live with their mother, Mrs. Dashwood (Michelle Calhoun).

But Fanny (Angie Green), John's greedy, calculating wife, convinces him that it wouldn't be fair to deprive their young son of his fortune. In fact, Fanny's only good attribute is her brother, Edward Ferrars (Jared Lively), a charming, polite, albeit shy young man with whom the serious, sensible Elinor Dashwood instantly forms a connection.

The widow Dashwood and her three daughters are left destitute, forced to vacate their estate, Norland, and move to a small seaside cottage, dashing Elinor's hopes of seeing Edward again. Fortunately, Mrs. Dashwood's cousin, Sir John (Bob Ives), along with his wife and her spirited mother, Mrs. Jennings (Jacqueline King), live nearby and insist upon hosting social gatherings for the Dashwoods and their neighbors—including Colonel Brandon (John Proctor), who instantly falls for young Marianne. Sadly for him, impetuous Marianne vastly prefers the roguish Mr. Willoughby (also played by Temple).

Elinor follows her head rather than her heart when it comes to Edward, while Marianne is ruled entirely by her heart, leading to despair. The sisters can only find happiness when endeavor to influence and be influenced by each other.

I loved every minute of this play, from the impressive acting by Rispin and Van Dyne as Elinor and Marianne to the romantic, toe-curling chemistry between Elinor and Edward, to the rollicking humor of Sir John and Mrs. Jennings. I loved the diverse cast of actors of all ages and experience levels working in true ensemble fashion, adroitly carrying multiple roles. I loved that the material honors Austen's original work while quickening the pace and injecting humor to reach a new generation of fans. The play benefits from strong direction, engaged and talented actors and whip-smart scripting. □

Sense and Sensibility



Sense and Sensibility is being directed by James Mardock at Reno Little Theater, 147 E. Pueblo St. Shows are at 7:30 p.m. until July 25 and at 2 p.m. on July 14, 21 and 28. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$20 for seniors/military, \$15 for students \$12 for kids 12 and under. For information and to purchase tickets, visit www.renolittletheater.org or call 813-8900.