Dramashop's Volpone - humor with morals

By Leigh J. Passman

Volpone: Or, the Fox, which will be presented by the MIT Dramashop this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, February 17, 18, and 19, opened this past Wednesday with a lucid and enjoyable production of Ben Jonson's Elizabethan comedy.

Jonson's play, a forerunner of Elizabethan realistic satire, centers around Volpone (Andrew Piecka '72), a rich Venetian, and his knavish cohort Mosca (Albert Ruesga '80), who greedily extract lavish gifts from townspeople who shower him with them, in hope of being named Volpone's heir. The three main suitors of his wealth are Voltaire, a lawyer (Mark de Lemos '78), Corbaccio, an old gentleman (Emil Millet '73), and Corvirio, a merchant (Curtis Fennell '78).

The acting by these five principal characters is excellent, with Mosca's ability to con the three "heirs" skillful and most entertaining. At one point when each of the three "heirs" suspects that they have been deceived, Mosca quickly concocts an explanation and convinces them each that the actions he has taken, which seemingly throw the wealth to one of the other "heirs," will actually benefit them in the end. Volpone's greed for wealth and his lust for the power over people that it commands, are well demonstrated by Andrew Piecka.

A fourth "heir" (who appears later in the play) is Lady Politic Wouldbe, Joan Tonolino, who played this role, stole the show with her hilarious and perfect portrayal of the vociferous and excitable Lady. Jonson's play, while a comedy, has a strong moral tone, and in fact it is Jonson's use of satire that drives his negative examples.

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