



[The Man of Mode at HOME](#)

Reviewed by [Matthew Dougal](#) February 2018

For their first public production of 2018, Manchester School of Theatre chose a rarely performed and somewhat neglected comedy from the Restoration period. Written just 60 years after the death of Shakespeare, one marvels at the way the 'mode' of writing, vocabulary and character have changed so dramatically in such a short time.

Innovative for its time, following trends being set by French writers, especially Moliere, and supposedly lampooning The Earl of Rochester, John Wilmot, I have the feeling that it would have been far bawdier and proletarian than the rather clinical version I witnessed today.

The play is The Man of Mode by George Etherege, and in a nutshell is all about love, lust and the greed of sexual liaison. The protagonist and libertine, a certain Dorimant, is trying to parse himself from his current mistress, the aptly named Mrs. Loveit, to form an alliance with the younger and more beautiful Harriet. A certain Belinda however gets to him first. In the meantime, his friend Bellair announces his love for the fair Emilia, and an outrageously overdressed and affectatious fop Sir Fopling Flutter comes along and sets his sights on Mrs. Loveit. Well that's how it all starts at least!

On entering the auditorium we were presented with a traverse style stage which had audience on the two lengthier outskirts of a rectangle and gilt archways, doors, a small desk and other period looking items on either side. It spoke of opulence and excess. However, the floor was a chess board style check, brown towards the edges with dirt and what looked like specks of blood, suggesting that all was not as clean and proper as it may seem on the surface. I liked this visual metaphor (Irene Jade). Period music helped set the mood both before the start of the play and in the interval, whilst costumes were, on the whole, of a high standard and looked more or less authentic (Chloe Ramsay).

For a play it was an extremely large cast, and even using 15 actors, some of them still had to play more than one role. However, all of them were of the high standard that I have come to expect from students of Manchester School of Theatre. Stand-out performances came from Jordan Tweddle as a strong with a soupcon on homosexuality friend and ally to Dorimant, Mr. Medley; whilst Dorimant himself, played by Jake Ashton-Nelson worked hard to keep up with

the much stronger characters of medley, Fopling-Flutter and Mrs. Loveit. Megan McInerney (Belinda) and Michaela Forbes (Harriet) made excellent work of their roles.

Chris Honer directed, and although more humour and bawdiness could certainly have been found, it was a solid and sensible production. I enjoyed the mirroring and 'clowning' of Fopling-Flutter's servants. Another success for the school to chalk up; and I look forward to their next production in March, A Waste of Time.