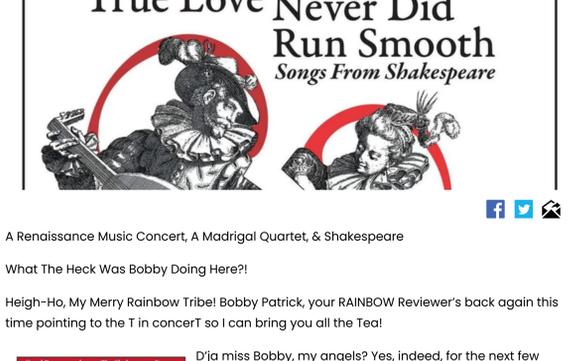


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Review: TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH Sweetly Sings at El Barrio Artspace PS 109

Songs From Shakespeare, Madrigal style, is back in fashion.
By: Bobby Patrick Feb. 15, 2026



A Renaissance Music Concert, A Madrigal Quartet, & Shakespeare

What The Heck Was Bobby Doing Here?!

Heigh-Ho, My Merry Rainbow Tribe! Bobby Patrick, your RAINBOW Reviewer's back again this time pointing to the T in concert! so I can bring you all the Tea!

D'ja miss Bobby, my angels? Yes, indeed, for the next few paragraphs, you will, once again, have your rainbow boy back in the reviewing saddle. Owing to a very odd convergence of events, Bobby was asked to take an unexpected sojourn uptown, so we hopped on the 2nd Ave Q and zipped up to **El Barrio's Artspace PS109** on E. 99th Street, where we caught a magical musical merging of lutes and Shakespeare. While this may sound a bit grand and "long hair," you all know Bobby would not poke his head up to tell you all about it if the show were not worthy. **The Good Pennyworths** (a Vocal Quartet & Lute group) and Harlem-adjacent staple, **The Shakespeare Forum**, joined forces to present a staged concert of Renaissance music originally composed around the poetry of one Bill Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon. Bobby can hear your head scratches from here, me dears. "But Bobby..." We hear you all shouting at your screens, "Why would you come out of retirement... make a return now, after so long, to review a Renaissance Musical Concert - with a lute no less?" Yeah, Yeah, this is nowhere near Bobby's usual fare, but let us tell you, up front, that the beauty of Good Pennyworth's **TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH: Songs From Shakespeare** moved Bobby out of the basement at Artspace and right over to this keyboard.



Yes, TRUE LOVE... is certainly niche. Well, you all know that sometimes Bobby likes to scratch a niche, and these marvelous musical musings on Love, Loss, and the Taming of the Lute are certainly worthy of attention. Featuring wonderful vocals from Laura Whittenberger (Soprano), Anna Willson (Mezzo), Alex Lyons (Tenor/Recorders), and Garald Farnham (Baritone/Lute), this bright, spritely hour of madrigal quartet'ing, mixed with choral trio'ing, dueting, and soloing was, in an Elizabethan word, delightful. The program was built around music set to Shakespeare's lyrics, in-play poetry, and sonnets composed by about a half dozen dudes named Thomas, 3 or 4 Johns, and a Robert or two sprinkled on top, and all penned in the late 15 to 1600s. While all that might sound like a snooze-fest to some, this music was the Rock & Roll of its day, and it still has its fans, as well as occasional listeners like yoursveryrainbowtruly, and others who may have sung in the madrigal chorus in high school. The 60 minutes is broken into 6 scenes that take listeners through the highs and lows and back up to the highs of love, as it walks in the gardens of life, death, conflict, and jealousy, all accompanied by Farnham's ever-present, meticulously played lute. Each of the four voices stacks beautifully on top of Farnham's musicianship with light, airy tones that please the ear and NEVER obscure the words. Farnham's three young troubadours all have wonderfully trained voices that meld in musicality and intonation throughout, and never once tread on notes, lyrics, or each other. Their musical accompanist may have the least "legit" trained voice of the group, but the baritone that Farnham adds underneath the trilling of those higher voices is foundational, musical and eminently listenable (that's a word... Bobby looked it up), and his solos, such as his rendition of Thomas Morely's (that's one Thomas) O MISTRESS MINE from 12TH NIGHT feels as though it is echoing through time to the present day. Tenor Lyons is also strapped with a quiver of fluty recorders with which he gets... well, fluty, and very well, too. He is a trained clarinetist (per his bio), and so the Recorder is an easy transition for him, and he plays beautifully with fine breath control on the instruments, and when it's in combination with the wonderful voices of the ladies Whittenberger and Wilson, the moments really ... sing.

Using snippets of spoken text from the Bard's work to move between songs and scenes, the script, adapted by one of Farnham's co-creators, Katherine Harte, is slightly less interesting than the music, but these spoken transitions are all skillfully handled by husband-and-wife directors (and **Shakespeare Forum** founders) Sybille Bruun and **Tyler Moss**, who make music of their own with the spoken Shakespearean language that is clear and concise. Along with Harte and Farnham, Alane Marco is credited as a creator on the piece, and they have given the team of Bruun & Moss lovely clay to mold.

So, there it is, my dearlings, **TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH: Songs From Shakespeare** was the perfect Valentine's weekend fare of love and laughter, and the good news is that it has 4 more performances next week, so you can still get your romance on in February because Bobby gives this one a nice

4 out of 5 Rainbows

There is a suggested donation of \$20 at the door, but honestly, it's a pay-what-you-can kind of show, and worth whatever you can give, and it's all in the basement of

El Barrio's Artspace PS109
215 East 99th Street (Between 2nd & 3rd Aves)
New York, NY, 10029

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CONCEIVED & DEVELOPED BY Garald Farnham, Katherine Harte Daerr & Alane Marco
SHAKESPEARE SCRIPT BY Katherine Harte Daerr
STAGE DIRECTION BY Sybille Bruun-Moss and Tyler Moss
MUSICAL DIRECTION BY Garald Farnham

Laura Whittenberger — Soprano I
Anna Willson — Soprano II
Alex Lyons — Tenor, Recorders
Garald Farnham — Baritone, Lutes

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