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Review: SOMETHING ROTTEN! at English Theatre, Frankfurt

Amazing comeback for the beloved venue

By: André Böke Feb. 08, 2026

“Welcome to the Renaissance!” – after an odyssey of obstacles and hindrances, continental Europe’s biggest English-language theatre venue has finally reopened its gates with a true musical banger: “Something Rotten” has returned to Frankfurt, featuring a cast and production that establish a quality easily transferable to the West End.

The hit show was already staged at Frankfurt’s English Theatre in 2023, before the venue was forcibly shut down until as recently as February 2026. The creative team and parts of the ensemble return from the United Kingdom to Germany’s capital of finance, lovingly nicknamed “Mainhattan”. With a brand-new sound system, the acoustics are crystal clear, and the stage design is as gorgeous as ever. Ewan Jones’ staging focuses on the lightness of the original book and gives plenty of room for good laughs and overall cheerfulness. Costumes and set are symbiotically designed by Stewart J. Charlesworth and perfectly reflect Elizabethan-era fashion, with a pinch of parody clearly visible in the clothing. The stage set mimics Shakespeare’s famous Globe Theatre and establishes a play within a play.

Brothers Nigel and Nick Bottom are breadless bards who cannot manage to compete with Shakespeare, although the younger brother, Nigel, is obviously poetically versed. Nick relies on the help of a nephew of Nostradamus, the infamous prophet, to steal Shakesy’s biggest future hit. Instead of “Hamlet”, however, the fortune teller receives a weird keyword from the coming centuries: “Omelet” – and it is to be a so-called “musical”. Without further ado, Nick sets the stage for the world’s first musical theatre production. A plethora of quirky characters accompany this story: Bea, Nick’s wife, tries to become the first emancipated working-class woman, and Portia, daughter of cranky Puritan priest Brother Jeremiah, who speaks ambiguously with a Southern States accent, is not only fascinated by poetry but also quite aroused. Alongside the theatre troupe surrounding the Bottoms, into which Shakespeare sneaks as a poetry spy to find inspiration for his own work, Jewish-cliché-fulfilling patron Shylock and snobbish Lord Clapham, a true volley of parody evolves. Not only poetry, Renaissance lifestyle, and gender roles are targeted, but also the musical theatre genre itself: the antagonist of “Omelet” is “The Lion King’s” Uncle Scar, and the protagonists are constantly looking for Macavity from “Cats”, for instance.

Anna Short’s sound design still has to reach its full potential after the spontaneous reopening and the subsequent impromptu premiere. The same applies to Jamie Platt’s lighting design – given a little more time to get things rolling, sound and light will surely fit perfectly into the narrative and the joyous stage mood conveyed throughout the show. Jones’ choreography is nothing short of amazing and could be seamlessly transferred to London or New York in terms of quality: modern show numbers incorporating parodies of dances made famous in “Chicago” and the like combine with revue dances and medieval-inspired choreography. Highlights are the frequent, energetic tap dance numbers that heat up the auditorium.

The whole cast demonstrates the highest level of artistry and performance energy. Lauren Arney, Francesca Jasmine, Myles Waby, and Josh Belward complement the production with high energy and excite the audience without exception. Mal Hall’s band plays in a vibrant and elated manner through Karey and Wayne Kirkpatrick’s classic Broadway show tunes.

The attended show featured some unforeseen cast changes that did not reduce the performative quality at all. Jonathan Norman takes over the role of Nostradamus from Tom Watson and convinces with strong comedic timing and contagious charisma. Luke Breathnach’s Shylock is quirky and likeable, fulfilling the clichés with a wink without being too striking. Lord Clapham is played by Josh Belward in an entertainingly cranky manner, and Liam Huband enthalls as theatre group member Robin, who is not afraid to perform in women’s robes, even incorporating Queen Elizabeth I herself. Bradley Adam’s priest Jeremiah is funny in his own right; his Southern States accent adds to the foolishness of his role, which is filled with ambiguous sexual quotes – a comedy gem. Portia is portrayed by Brianna Kelly: squeaky and over the top, her Puritan daughter enthalls the audience with hilariously overexcited mannerisms and a rollercoaster of emotions. Bea, Nick’s rather boisterous wife, portrayed by Beth Bradley, is the secret star of the show: she combines top-class vocals and acting with a fine sense for comedy, managing to pull the audience to her side of the story. Benjamin Stratton is a true rockstar version of William Shakespeare, with all the narcissistic, airy, and diva-like characteristics one would normally attribute to a celebrity of our times. Quoting himself as the culmination of his self-aggrandizement is peak comedy. Reuben Browne shines as Nick, and Charlie Smart delights as Nigel, the unequal yet equally passionate brothers at the center of the story. The duo delivers top-notch performances in singing, dancing, comedy, and – considering the rather lighthearted story – surprisingly nuanced acting.

Combining show-stopping dances, catchy Broadway tunes, great visuals, and a stellar ensemble, the English Theatre Frankfurt celebrates an amazing comeback. Do not miss this chance to experience West End excellence in Germany!