The wonderful Antaeus Company comes up with another winner in the classical comedy vein — a rip-roaring production of "The Malcontent" (1604).

The poetic revenge play from the Jacobean period offers a terrific mix of courtly intrigue, lust and betrayal, written for boy actors by John Marston (1576-1634), replete with lashings of humor, farce, sex, politics and, and, and, and, betrayal, with a rip-roaring happy ending. What a delight!

This is Shakespeare-plus — a whole lot of fun for the actors and audience alike. All the usual suspects are given full play — the lovers, the comic, the comics, the same and sober good guys, belitigated by the foolish, the losers and the innocently funny that one would expect in a courtly farce/comedy. It has lashings of courtly corruption, bare-faced suit, towering ambition, malice, mischief, and more than a hint of romance and sexual adventuring, pure and not so pure, and often downright raucous — all the things that make late Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre so culturally intriguing and just a tad shocking to a contemporary audience. A bit of a warning here: the first act language takes a bit of getting used to. While it’s not quite Shakespeare, to which theatregoers have become fairly adjusted, especially in modern translations, it’s not quite contemporary either. The flavor of the language is a tad tougher than updated versions of old Will’s, and takes a few moments to acclimatise the modern ear to its rhythm. Extremely colorful, in the mayhem, as well as being both bawdy, descriptive and uncompromisingly sexy, the Antaeus Company dives into the text with their accustomed unflinching, unapologetic spirit, giving it their all which, as anyone who has been around these players for any length of time knows, is much more than a lot. Fortunately, for those who get lost in the language, there’s a glossary of Malcontent Terms in the "programme" (which is how Shakespeare or Marston would have spelled it). The glossary includes words like Bawd, Dufts, Polcets, and Posses, which might, or might not give you a fair idea of the tenor of the period piece. The two teams dividing acting honors are named Witsols and Cuckolds. That latter is self-explanatory: Witsols, according to the glossary, are compliant cuckolds.

Acting honors go to every one of these eloquent Caesars who have been dosed in the language, as you will have been by the end of the play. Not to worry, however: you don’t need to know the language, you’ll get the spirit of the play directly from the players.

Leading the honours list is the fabulous J.D. Cullum, who plays Alhofront, the usurped Duke of Genoa, who appears, who appears, a moon more in the disguise as Malevole the Malcontent, in order to get a jump can name today, Devon Sorvari is charming as Alhofront’s imprisoned Duchess. All the members of the Court, the corrupt and the upright, are as funny, and as delinquent, as any politicians in any era, in any court, in any land.

Elizabeth Swain, the accomplished director of the play, first saw it when she was in grad school and knew it was a play she would one day have to direct. (Its original production was over 400 years ago when it was performed by Children of the Chapel, a boy actors’ troupe at London’s Blackfriars Theatre in 1603 (the theatre that eventually became the indoor home of Shakespeare’s company, The King’s Men). First an actress, then a director, teaching and directing at NYU, Hunter, CCNY, Barnard and Marymount College, Swain moved to Los Angeles in 2008, and is now a freelance director and teacher, teaching classical theatre in Antaeus classes.

Anyone coming across "The Malcontent" by accident thinks of it as a farce, but its very dark undercurrents soon creep in. Nothing tragic happens, but a lot almost does. It’s a roller coaster ride, savage... and wonderful, with tragedy one minute and comedy the next. Go see it and take your choice. You’ll be glad you did.

The Malcontent, presented by Antaeus Company at DeerWest Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood, Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m., through June 19.

Free parking available in uncovered Gilbank parking lot on the west side of Lankershim Boulevard, south of Owens Street. For information, call (818)506-1983, or visit www.Antaeus.org.