

HUDSON  
VALLEY  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL



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# HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

## OUR MISSION AND SUPPORTERS

Founded in 1987, the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's mission is to engage the widest possible audience in a fresh conversation about what is essential in Shakespeare's plays. Both in production and in the classroom, our theater lives in the present moment, at the intersection of the virtuosity of the actor, the imagination of the audience, and the inspiration of the text. HVSF's primary home is a spectacular open-air theater tent at Boscobel House and Gardens in Garrison, NY. Every summer, more than 35,000 patrons join us there for a twelve-week season of plays presented in repertory, with the natural beauty of the Hudson Highlands as our backdrop. HVSF has produced more than 50 classical works on our mainstage.

Our exuberant productions garner consistent critical acclaim from regional and national media (New York Times, New Yorker, Wall Street Journal) for communicating great stories with clarity, energy and imagination. HVSF also takes the magic of Shakespeare and live theater beyond our tent by touring shows throughout the Hudson Valley and by presenting limited runs of classic plays in local landmark venues. HVSF's acclaimed arts education programs include training for early-career theater artists; professional development for educators; and programs and performances that serve more than 50,000 middle and high school students each year.

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Managing Director

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## EDUCATION DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

If I were to ask you, "What comes into your mind when I say Shakespeare?" there's a strong possibility you'd say "To be or not to be that is the question" – words spoken by a young person, devastated by a parent's death, and so depressed that he is contemplating suicide. Shakespeare's plays are filled with these situations, moments that express "the human condition," something immutable from generation to generation, continent to continent, despite all the differences in knowledge, culture and emphasis.

This is the reason why his plays continue to be produced everywhere, not just in English, but also in translation. The Ghost admonishes in Bulgarian, Hamlet kills Polonius in Mandarin, and Ophelia goes mad in Klingon, Esperanto, and Elfish. Shakespeare's characters are angry, happy, sad, jealous, envious, untrustworthy, deceptive, generous, forgiving...experiencing nearly every emotion you can think of, and every human situation.

Also, the burning social questions in today's dysfunctional society – the status of women, class inequality, racism, intolerance, crime, war, disease – are the same issues which feature in his plays. Shylock is hated still, Caliban remains enslaved, Hotspur rages on, and Cordelia hangs yet from the rafters.

One of the most popular arguments against Shakespeare's relevance is the language in which the plays are written. It can be rough going if you are reading *Hamlet* for the first time, and trying to make sense of it. But here is a way around this: watch the play! After all, Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* to be performed, not to be read in wretched isolation. By seeing a group of actors embodying the characters, it is possible to get a good sense of the story without looking up every unfamiliar word and becoming discouraged. The more plays that are enjoyed in this way - and enjoyment is paramount – the clearer a picture emerges of the universal and relevant situations that Shakespeare wrote about.

What about the playwright himself? What similarity does Shakespeare bear to modern man? Well he was what today we would call an entrepreneur, leaving his wife and family behind him in the country to pursue his career in the big city. He was a practical man of business, knowing what paid and what did not, and creating his own 'market'.

He hung out in the pub with his friends; he wrote to please audiences of all classes; he was successful enough to gain royal patronage, and to attract the hatred of rival playwrights; he had a sexual identity crisis; he associated with whores; he probably contracted a sexually transmitted disease.

It is just that, while living a full life, he simultaneously had the talent to write the most profound and deeply entertaining plays the world had yet seen. Those plays are still deeply entertaining people, and perhaps now more profound, whether in traditional dress or modern interpretation on the stage, or in countless film and TV adaptations throughout the world.

## PART ONE: SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND TIMES

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare, perhaps the most celebrated playwright of western culture, was born around April 23, 1564, though the exact date remains unknown. He was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a tradesman and glover, and Mary Arden, the daughter of a wealthy peasant. Little else is known about Shakespeare's childhood. Many think it likely that he attended grammar school, as he had an understanding of both Greek and Latin; however, it is known that he did not continue his formal education at a university.

In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway and had three children with her, one of which, Hamnet, died at the age of eleven in 1596. From 1585 to 1592, there is no known evidence documenting his life, a period which is referred to by biographers as the "lost years." It is thought that Shakespeare arrived in London around 1588 and began to establish himself as a playwright, poet, and actor. Throughout the next decade Shakespeare helped to form the acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. During the mid-1590's when the plague forced theaters around London to close for two years, Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men, along with several other acting companies, made plans to build their own theater on the south bank of the river Thames. In 1599, Shakespeare became a shareholder in the newly built Globe Theatre. In 1603, the Lord Chamberlain's Men received a royal patent from King James I and became known as the King's Men.

Around 1610, Shakespeare retired from London and returned to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he continued to write plays and invest in real-estate until his death in April, 1616. In his will, Shakespeare left the majority of his estate to his two daughters; however, he bequeathed his "second best bed" to his wife, Anne. The first folio of his plays was published in 1623. Writing over a hundred sonnets and over thirty plays, Shakespeare was a master of the comic and tragic dramatic forms of the late 16th century and his more well-known works include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet*. While writing *The Tempest*, Shakespeare retired to his home in Stratford. After *The Tempest* was completed he collaborated with John Fletcher on three more plays- *Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Cardenio*.

He died on his birthday, April 23, 1616. His epitaph reads: *Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear to dig the dust enclosed here. Blessed be the man that spares these stones, And cursed be he that moves my bones.* Since his death many have challenged whether or not Shakespeare authored all of the works he signed his name to. Commonly, people have argued that a lower middle-class man such as himself would not have adequate education or knowledge of court matters to write so insightfully and profoundly of the human condition and of kings, much less to use language so masterfully. Some people even think that Queen Elizabeth herself might have written the plays! There has never been any concrete evidence that has proven that anyone other than Shakespeare himself wrote all of the works, which he is still admired for centuries after his death.

## SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, from 1558 to 1603, England established itself as a cultural, military, and commercial power in the western world. In contrast to the preceding and subsequent eras, the conflicts between the Protestants and Catholics were quelled, to some extent, through compromises and concessions from the Queen to both religious groups. Under her rule, the country saw a decrease in national debt and an increase in overall revenue. In the years between 1577 and 1581, Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe. Tobacco and gold brought from the Americas created a new source of wealth for the country. London flourished as a center for cultural and mercantile exchange and became the heart of the English Renaissance. The arts, especially theater, flourished under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. During her time on the throne, from 1558 to 1603, theaters were built and thousands of Londoners flocked to see the various plays put on by companies of actors.

Elizabeth's successor, James I, a great admirer of poetry and the drama from his earliest days, became an advocate of Shakespeare's theater company, which they renamed The King's Men in honor of James' patronage. These were dangerous times. Multiple outbreaks of the plague, also known as "the Black Death," closed down theaters and killed tens of thousands. On November 5, 1605, two years after King James I took the throne, a group of religious dissidents planned to blow up Parliament (the British equivalent of Congress) on the opening day of the legislative session. Their plot was discovered just in time when Guy Fawkes, the man ready to ignite the explosives, was captured along with the other conspirators. They were all charged with treason, convicted, and publicly executed.

## THE ELIZABETHAN AND THE JACOBEAN STAGE

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, plays in England were performed in shared spaces: neighbors putting on medieval mystery plays in churches and inn yards, or (by the time Shakespeare was a child) traveling companies renting guildhalls. It was a stark and impoverished life. Players tried to win the affections of rich patrons, and longed for enough private performances before the nobility to stay out of debtor's prison. Then in 1576, Richard Burbage, a carpenter turned actor-manager, opened the doors of the first playhouse, simply called The Theater. Constructed just north of the city – and therefore exempt from London's laws regulating public performance – the business was instantly successful.

The Theater hosted some of the most successful companies of the age, including, in the 1590s, Shakespeare's troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. In the years that followed, Burbage's theater proved a model to many other successful ventures: The Curtain, The Rose, and of course, The Globe. Open to the sky, thirty feet tall, and polygonal, they housed a high, roofed stage surrounded on three sides by the audience, allowing the actors to enter or exit through the back of the stage to the dressing rooms. A second story was used for scenes requiring romance on a balcony, or chasing ghosts on castle battlements. A trap door led under the stage where sound effects or musicians could be obscured or where the witches and fairy queens might disappear into thin air.

## PART TWO: THE PLAY

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is home from school to mourn the death of his father, King Hamlet, who has died two months earlier. Hamlet is disgusted by the marriage of his newly widowed mother, Queen Gertrude, to his Uncle, King Hamlet's brother, Claudius, who now has the throne.

Shortly thereafter, a ghost has appeared to guards on nightly watch as well as Hamlet's good friend, Horatio, who thinks the spirit has a likeness to the former King Hamlet. Horatio asks Hamlet to wait for the ghost and see if it will speak to him. The ghost of his father beckons Hamlet to follow him and reveals that his brother Claudius poisoned him in the ear. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder.

Meanwhile, Laertes, son to the King's advisor Polonius is set to return to France. Before he leaves, he tells Ophelia, his sister, to be wary of Hamlet's affections towards her. Polonius gives Laertes advice on how to act abroad and orders Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet.

Hamlet's sanity begins to be questioned by all. Claudius and Gertrude are both concerned; Polonius suggests it is Ophelia's rejection of his advances. Claudius and Polonius decide to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia. Claudius further employs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two childhood friends of Hamlet, to spy on him further. Hamlet quickly realizes their intentions.

A troupe of players happen to be in town and Hamlet utilizes the actors to determine the validity of his father's murder. He will have them perform the very act of murder, killing a king through poison in the ear, which the ghost has claimed. He asks Horatio to watch Claudius' reaction throughout the play. While the court is watching, Claudius is enraged and leaves the play convincing Hamlet that he is the murderer.

Hamlet comes upon Claudius in the chapel, kneeling down to pray. He considers killing him then and there, but since Claudius is in mid-prayer, and will therefore go to heaven if he dies, Hamlet decides to wait until Claudius is committing some sin, so that he will go to hell like Hamlet's father before him.

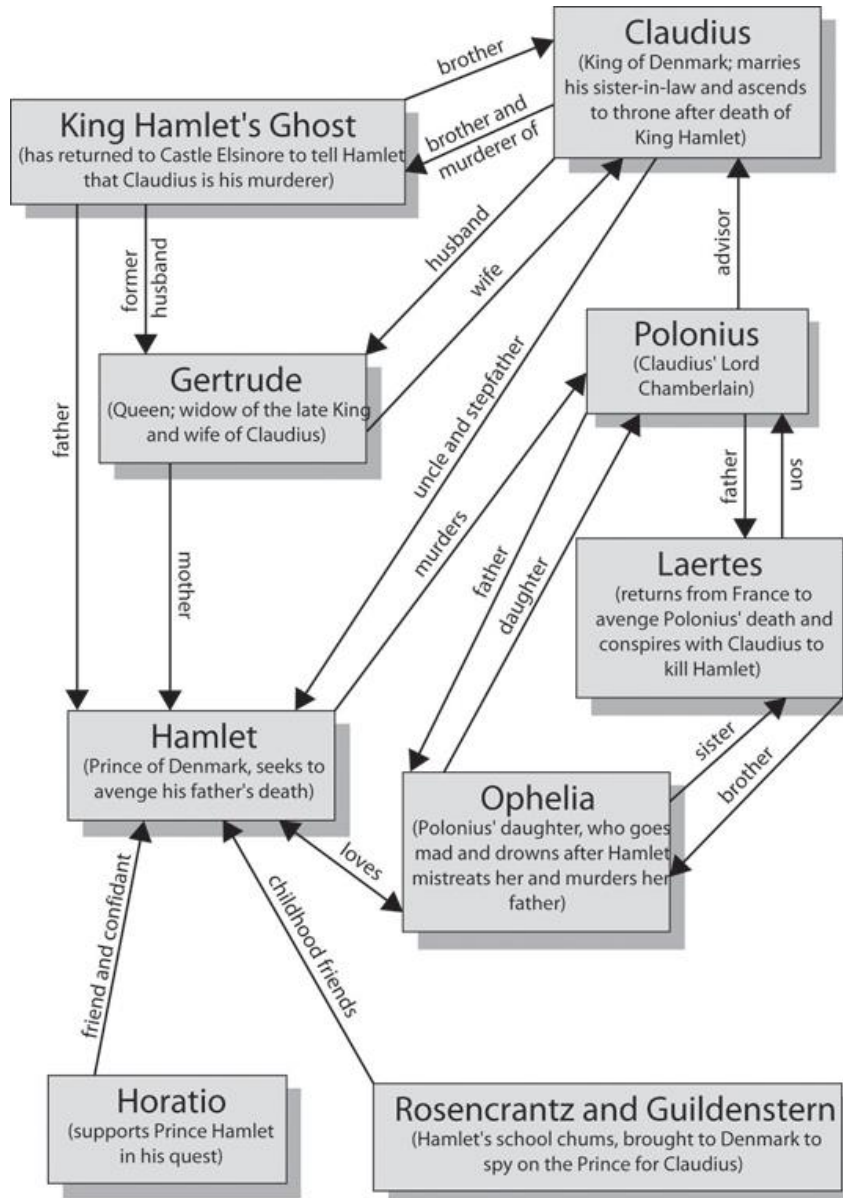
Hamlet meets Gertrude in her room and an argument ensues. When he hears Polonius who is hiding behind the curtain shout for help, he stabs him thinking it is Claudius. The ghost appears to Hamlet to refocus him on the task of killing Claudius.

Claudius demands that Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern head for England. Claudius has sent a letter with them ordering Hamlet's execution during the trip. While at sea, however, Hamlet discovers his planned murder and switches the orders, causing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to be executed. Hamlet returns to Denmark. Meanwhile back at Elsinore, Ophelia has gone mad with grief. Laertes returns from France and learns it was Hamlet who has killed his father, Polonius. Claudius suggests that Laertes duel with Hamlet and poisons the tip of Laertes foil for a fatal blow. If Laertes loses the duel, Claudius will put poison into a drink for Hamlet. Gertrude enters and announces that Ophelia has drowned. When the procession arrives with Ophelia's corpse, Laertes and Hamlet argue. A duel is scheduled.

During the fight, Gertrude accidentally drinks from the poisoned chalice and dies. Hamlet is wounded with the poisoned sword, but in a scuffle, the foils are switched and Laertes is also wounded with the poisoned foil. In dying, Laertes confesses Claudius' plot to kill Hamlet. Hamlet stabs Claudius and Hamlet dies asking Horatio to tell his story.

**The Ghost**, Prince Hamlet's Father  
**Hamlet**, Prince of Denmark, son of the late King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude  
**Queen Gertrude**, widow of King Hamlet, now married to Claudius  
**King Claudius**, brother to the late King Hamlet

**Ophelia**, in love with Hamlet  
**Laertes**, Ophelia's brother  
**Polonius**, father of Ophelia and Laertes, councilor to King Claudius  
**Horatio**, Hamlet's friend and confidant  
**Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Osric** courtiers at the Danish court Osric





## WHO'S WHO: THE CAST



**Bonnie Antosh**  
Horatio



**Jarrod Bates**  
Hamlet



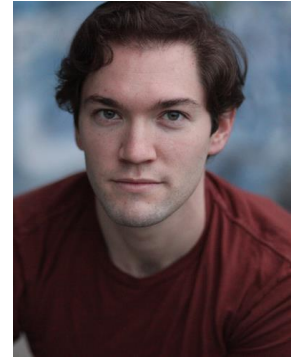
**Russell Carpenter**  
Laertes



**Jo'Lisa Jones**  
Polonius



**Anamari Mesa**  
Ophelia



**James Parenti**  
Claudius, Ghost



**Simone Stadler**  
Gertrude

### PRODUCTION TEAM

**Devin Brain, *Director***  
**Katie Meade, *Production Manager***  
**Kat Meister, *Stage Manager***

**Charlotte Palmer-Lane, *Costume Designer***  
**Sue Rees, *Scenic Designer***  
**Paul Lieber, *Composer***  
**Leighton Schlanger, *Fight Choreographer***

**Amy Crossman, *Understudy***  
**Sean Lounsbury, *Understudy***

## THE ORIGINS OF THE PLAY

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* precedes its own reputation. It was Shakespeare's most popular play during his lifetime and remains the most produced work of his to date. In fact, it is speculated that *Hamlet* is performed somewhere every minute of every single day. Most people unknowingly quote *Hamlet* with phrases such as "in my mind's eye" or "what a piece of work." The play has even been translated into Klingon and featured in an episode of Star Trek (in case you were curious "To be or not to be" in Klingon is, "taH pagh taHbe.")

While *Hamlet* reigns as a cultural staple, the play's origin is often contested. There are several theories about the inspiration for *Hamlet*, from 12th century Danish literature to Indo-European character archetypes. Scholars can trace a similar story to a 9th century Scandinavian folktale of *Amleth*, a prince who feigned madness to exact revenge on his uncle for killing his father. "Amleth" or "Amlóði" actually is translated into "mad" or "not sane" in Norse. Beyond just the similarity between the names, the themes of madness and revenge are concrete plot points in each story and it becomes relatively easy to see how Amleth was the predecessor to the Elizabethan tragedy. Eventually, the legend of *Amleth* was translated into French during the 16th century, which is where Shakespeare would likely have first encountered this story and character. While the lore of *Amleth* is certainly appears analogous, historic literature is riddled with interpretations of mad princes, including Icelandic sagas and Roman legends. Knowing precisely where Shakespeare found his inspiration for *Hamlet* is practically impossible, but these glimpses into history give us some possible context clues.

Beyond historical influences, Shakespeare may have taken inspiration from his own life. In 1596, Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, passed away at only eleven years old. Hamlet's own struggle with grief mirrors Shakespeare's, each traversing through the after effects of loss, not to mention the similarity between the titular character and his son's name. However, most scholars argue that the origin story of *Hamlet* is too obviously derived from legend and that Hamnet's death was auxiliary in Shakespeare's writing process.

It is difficult to discern what truly motivated Shakespeare to write his famous epic, but we can agree that *Hamlet* has certainly transformed theatre and English. From introducing new idioms into the English language to *The Lion King*, even to a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip, *Hamlet* is pervasive throughout history and in our current culture. While trying to uncover the mysteries of *Hamlet* remains significant, it is thrilling to see where the play has taken us and where it will continue to go as we adapt and experiment with the Bard's magnum opus.

## THEMES

### **To be or not to be, that is the question: Death**

Death permeates *Hamlet* right from the opening scene of the play, where the ghost of Hamlet's father introduces the idea of death and its consequences. The ghost represents a disruption to the accepted social order – a theme also reflected in the volatile socio-political state of Denmark and Hamlet's own indecision.

This disorder has been triggered by the "unnatural death" of Denmark's figurehead, soon followed by a raft of murder, suicide, revenge and accidental deaths.

Hamlet is fascinated by death throughout the play. Deeply rooted in his character, this obsession with death is likely a product of his grief.

### **Hamlet's Preoccupation with Death**

Hamlet's most direct consideration of death comes in Act 4, Scene 3. His obsession with the idea is revealed when asked by Claudius where he has hidden Polonius' body.

*HAMLET: At supper ... Not where he eats, but where a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service – two dishes, but to one table. That's the end.*

Hamlet is describing the life-cycle of human existence. In other words: we eat in life; we are eaten in death.

### **Death and the Yorick Scene**

The frailty of human existence haunts Hamlet throughout the play and it's a theme he returns to in Act 5, Scene 1: the iconic graveyard scene.

Holding the skull of Yorick, the court jester who entertained him as a child, Hamlet ponders the brevity and futility of the human condition and the inevitability of death:

*HAMLET: Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs? Your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?*

This sets the scene for Ophelia's funeral where she too will be returned to the ground.

### **Ophelia's Death**

Perhaps the most tragic death in *Hamlet* is one the audience doesn't witness. Ophelia's death is reported by Gertrude: Hamlet's would-be bride falls from a tree and drowns in a brook. Whether or not her death was a suicide is the subject of much debate among Shakespearean scholars.

A sexton suggests as much at her gravesite, to the outrage of Laertes. He and Hamlet then quarrel over who loved Ophelia more, and Gertrude mentions her regret that Hamlet and Ophelia could have been married.

What's perhaps the saddest part of Ophelia's death is that Hamlet appeared to drive her to it; had he taken action earlier to avenge his father, perhaps Polonius and she would not have died so tragically.

## Suicide in Hamlet

The idea of suicide also emerges from Hamlet's preoccupation with death. Although he seems to consider killing himself as an option, he does not act on this idea. Similarly, he does not act when he has the opportunity to kill Claudius and avenge the murder of his father in Act 3, Scene 3. Ironically, it is this lack of action on Hamlet's part that ultimately leads to his death at the end of the play.

## **Revenge my foul and most unnatural murder: Vengeance**

Revenge is the initial motivation for Hamlet's transformation into anger and madness.

In Shakespeare's time, "Revenge Tragedies" were a popular form of entertainment for theatre goers. The Bible explicitly forbids revenge but human instinct often wants it.

Hamlet strongly desires revenge for his father's murder, but other concerns cloud the issue. For example, Hamlet has the chance to kill Claudius when he finds him apparently kneeling in prayer. Hamlet hesitates because he fears that if Claudius dies while he is praying, he might go to heaven. Hamlet is determined that Claudius should go to hell for his betrayal and deception.

The uncertainty about the nature of the old King's death also confuses the matter. Hamlet feels unable to take revenge unless he is absolutely sure of Claudius' guilt. Hamlet fears that the Ghost is not his father but an evil spirit sent to tempt him to Hell.

Laertes' sense of revenge is much stronger than Hamlet's and Shakespeare contrasts the two. Laertes does not need to be convinced of Hamlet's guilt to take revenge. On hearing Hamlet's explanation for Polonius' death, Laertes declares that he is "satisfied in nature." By this he means that he understands Hamlet's actions, but it does not stop him from fighting Hamlet in a duel with a poisoned and sharpened sword.

## **I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw: Madness**

After speaking to the Ghost, Hamlet decides to "put an antic disposition on", meaning he is going to feign madness.

Hamlet hopes that by pretending to be mad, he will be able to study the King's behavior without arousing suspicion. Ironically, Claudius declares that "madness in great ones must not unwatched go" and Hamlet ends up being more closely watched than ever.

Hamlet's apparent madness also has the effect of alienating himself. Ophelia, in particular, suffers from this. She was once loved by Hamlet, but in his madness he frightens her and claims not to have ever loved her. There are different reasons why Hamlet may have done this:

- His mother's unfaithfulness and incest could have caused him to lose trust in all relationships. His treatment of Ophelia is perhaps a sincere attempt to persuade her against marriage ("get thee to a nunnery").
- Or perhaps Hamlet wants to remove any love from his own life to be in the right frame of mind to kill Claudius.

### **Ophelia is driven mad during the play**

Ophelia's madness is not a deception. As a loyal daughter and would-be wife, the loss of her father and lover prove too much and she descends into madness. Perhaps Shakespeare wants to show the effects of a corrupt, disordered world on a pure and innocent soul. Some critics suggest that Ophelia's madness is a result of the pressure on a woman in a male-dominated world.

Ophelia's madness parallels Hamlet's:

- both have lost their fathers.
- both have been apparently spurned by a loved one.

Ophelia, however, doesn't have the intellectual capacity to understand the corruption around her and she suffers terribly as a result.

### **Meet it is I set it down. That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain: Deception**

Deception causes many of the play's events. Claudius claims the throne from the old King by murdering him.

His position is therefore false and this is what spurs Hamlet to seek revenge. However, the audience's knowledge of this murder comes from the spirit of the old King - and it is possible that the Ghost is deceiving Hamlet from beyond the grave.

Hamlet is also guilty of deception. He secretly desires revenge, and plots and schemes behind others' backs. He feigns madness and puts on a play for the purpose of trapping Claudius.

As well as hiding his murder of the old King, Claudius is deceitful on other occasions:

- He sends for Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to spy on his stepson and discover what he knows about the murder of the old King.
- Also, he sends a letter to the English court to ask them to execute Hamlet.
- Finally, he plots with Laertes to poison Hamlet.

None of these acts of deception result in what the characters intend.

- Hamlet's madness causes his beloved Ophelia's suicide.
- Claudius' poison ends up killing Laertes, Gertrude and himself.

## **A Genre Play: Revenge Tragedy or Tragedy?**

Sure, *tragedy* is right there in the title. But *Hamlet* isn't just any tragedy—it's a classic revenge tragedy. Revenge tragedies were all the rage in England during the late 16th and early 17th century, influenced by Seneca's (c. 4 BC - 65 AD) Roman adaptations of Greek tragedies. A Renaissance man named Thomas Kyd is particularly famous for writing revenge tragedies, not just his *Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587) but maybe also a lost play that scholars call the Ur-Hamlet—a predecessor to Shakespeare's.

## REVENGE TRAGEDY

So, just what elements do we need to call this play a revenge tragedy?

*Secret Murder: Something's "rotten in the state of Denmark"* and we find out exactly what it is in Act I, Scene v —Old King Hamlet wasn't "stung" by a poisonous "serpent" after all. Turns out, his brother Claudius poured poison in his ear while he was sleeping in his garden. What's worse, Claudius then helped himself not only to his dead brother's crown but also to his queen, Gertrude.

*Murder Victim's Ghost Visits a Relative:* How do we know old Hamlet was murdered by his brother Claudius? Because his ghost tells young Hamlet. Plus, Claudius admits as much when he's kneeling in prayer in Act III, scene iii. The ghost is pretty demanding, too —he suggests he's stuck in Purgatory and needs Hamlet's help if he wants out, so he asks young Hamlet to "*remember*" him and to "*revenge his foul and most unnatural murder*". In other words, the ghost wants Hamlet to kill Claudius so he, the ghost, can go to heaven.

*Hero Wants Revenge:* Naturally, Hamlet wants to take revenge on his murdering, incestuous uncle. Here's the thing that separates Hamlet from other "Revenge Tragedies": It takes Hamlet for-e-ver to exact revenge.

*Plotting, Disguises, and Intrigue Ensnare:* Hamlet's pretty sure he believes the ghost, and he certainly wants to believe the ghost, but he needs to be certain. So, he pretends to be mad.

Hamlet's odd behavior then causes everyone else to try to figure out why Hamlet's acting so strange. Claudius asks Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to spy on Hamlet; Polonius uses Ophelia as bait to spy on Hamlet; Polonius hides behind the arras in Gertrude's room and spies directly on Hamlet; Hamlet puts on a play about murder to see how Claudius reacts; and so on.

*Madness (Real and/or feigned):* Hamlet tells Horatio that he will feign madness. But the play also asks us to think about whether or not he actually descends into real lunacy. Meanwhile, Ophelia clearly goes insane.

*Rising Body Count:* The body count steadily rises throughout the play. First, Hamlet stabs Polonius while he is spying on Hamlet and Gertrude from behind the arras in Gertrude's bedroom. Next, Ophelia goes mad and drowns. Intentional? Accident? Also, Claudius sends Hamlet to London to have him secretly murdered but Hamlet has Rosencrantz and Guildenstern executed instead.

*Major Bloodbath including Hero's Violent Death:* The eruption of violence begins when Claudius and Laertes arrange a "friendly" duel between Laertes and Hamlet. At said duel, Gertrude drinks a cup of poisoned wine that was originally intended for Hamlet. Laertes then cuts Hamlet with a poison-tipped sword and then Hamlet turns around and stabs Laertes with the same poison-tipped sword. Laertes reveals that Claudius has planned the whole thing. Naturally, Hamlet then stabs Claudius and makes him drink the rest of the poisoned wine.

## TRAGEDY

*Hamlet* also fits into the larger and more general category of *Tragedy* (which also includes plays like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*)?

*Dramatic work:* Hamlet is a definitely a play.

*Serious or somber theme:* Hamlet's distress over his father's death and his mother's "hasty" remarriage to his uncle leaves him distraught, which is why Hamlet repeatedly reached out to the audience in soliloquies about grief, death, and suicide. Plus, a ghost shows up and tells Hamlet to kill his uncle, who, it turns out, is responsible for murdering Hamlet's father.

*Hero's got a major flaw of character or conflict with some overpowering force:* Hamlet's major flaw deliberation and doubt is in serious conflict with his promised need for revenge.

*Hero is destined for destruction and downfall:* After all his deliberation about death, suicide, and the legitimacy of the ghost's demands, Hamlet finally acknowledges that his fate has been "shaped" by some "divinity". Just before his duel with Laertes (the duel that will end Hamlet's life), Hamlet decides to give in to what he calls God's providence.

*If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.*

## PART THREE: WORDS, WORDS, WORDS...

### BY THE NUMBERS:

The Complete Works of Shakespeare total **884,647** words and **118,406** lines.

The average person today uses somewhere between **7,500** and **10,000** words. Shakespeare's working vocabulary was huge: He used **27,870** different words.

The average length of a play in Elizabethan England was **3,000** lines. *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's longest tragedy with **4,024** lines. *Macbeth* is his shortest play; with **2,477** lines. However, *Romeo and Juliet* is his fifth shortest tragedy with **3,093** lines.

Nobody knows for sure how many words Shakespeare actually coined. The problem is that although the earliest written example is in a Shakespeare play, the words could have been in common oral use during his life. It is also possible that other writers may have used a word earlier, but their work no longer survives. Scholars have suggested that the number is somewhere between several hundred and several thousand, but most agree that it was probably around **1,500**.

### THE ABCs OF SHAKESPEARE'S NEOLOGISMS

A: Advertising  
B: Bandit  
C: Critic  
D: Dickens  
E: Epileptic  
F: Film  
G: Gossip  
H: Hush  
I: Investment  
J: Jig  
K: Kissing  
L: Luggage  
M: Manager

N: Numb  
O: Obscene  
P: Puke  
Q: Quarrelsome  
R: Rant  
S: Shooting Star  
T: Torture  
U: Undress  
V: Varied  
W: Wild-goose chase  
X: Xantippe  
Y: Yelping  
Z: Zany



## SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

The language used by Shakespeare in his plays is in one of three forms: prose, rhymed verse, and blank verse each of which he uses to achieve specific effects.

**Prose** refers to **ordinary speech** with no regular pattern of accentual rhythm. If you are unsure if a passage is in prose or in blank verse, look for the following **visual clue**: a long passage in prose is typically printed in your text like an ordinary paragraph.

**Rhymed Verse** in Shakespeare's plays is usually in **rhymed couplets**, i.e. two successive lines of verse of which the final words rhyme with another.

**Blank Verse** refers to **unrhymed iambic pentameter**. Blank verse resembles prose in that the final words of the lines do not rhyme in any regular pattern.

Every line of verse in Shakespeare is written within a certain rhythmic framework. No matter how varied that framework may grow, it arises from one tiny component: the syllable. The rhythm of the text is dictated by the stresses placed on syllables when they are spoken. Those syllabic stresses fall into patterns, and those patterns come together to make a kind of scaffolding – a rhythmic framework – that holds poetic language together.

Scansion is a tool that actors can use to harness the rhythmic framework of the text as they work on it. And Scanning poetry is naming and analyzing the way the text works rhythmically.

### STATES, SYLLABLES, AND STRESSES

Consider **Vermont**. When you say it aloud, **-mont** has more stress than **Ver**. Montpelier is the capital of **ver MONT**, and not **VER mont**. The second syllable is emphasized and not the first. The nonsense syllables **tee-TUM** have the same pattern: first syllable unstressed, second syllable stressed.

**Jersey**, on the other hand, is the opposite. Its first syllable is stressed, **Jer**, but the second isn't, **-sey**. ? **JER-sey. Tum-tee.**

**Tennessee** has three syllables, the first two unstressed and the third stressed: **dee-dee-DUM**.

**Iowa**, the opposite: **TUM-tee-tee**.

Look at the pattern of syllables in the following bit of language:

**Boys and boys and girls and girls. Welcome to New York It's been waiting for you.**

**TUM tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM. TUM-tee tee tee-TUM tee tee TUM-tee tee-TUM**

That's scansion. All you need to know is what pattern the stressed and unstressed syllables make and how many repetitions of that pattern are found in each line of poetry.

## FEET + METER = SCANSION

Each unit of syllables is called a **foot**. Feet come in seven major varieties:

An **iamb** has two syllables. The first is unstressed and the second is stressed: **tee-TUM**. *Vermont*.

A **trochee** also has two syllables. The first is stressed; second, unstressed: TUM-tee. *Jersey*

An **anapest** has three syllables. The first two are unstressed, the third stressed: **tee-tee-TUM**. *Tennessee*.

A **dactyl**, which also has three syllables, is the opposite. The first syllable is stressed and the second two are unstressed: **TUM-tee-tee**. *Iowa*.

An **amphibrach** has three syllables. The first syllable is unstressed; the second, stressed; the third, unstressed: **tee-TUM-tee**. *Manhattan*.

Two types of feet remain, and they are a little more unusual than the five above.

A **spondee** has two syllables. Both are stressed: **TUM-TUM**.

A **pyrrhic**: is the spondee's opposite, also has two syllables. Both unstressed: **tee-tee**.

Individual words that are spondaic or pyrrhic are hard to find, although both feet are common in poetry. Consider these famous verses:

***O, say can you see, by the dawn's early light, what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming...***

The third line's rhythm is **tee-tee TUM-tee TUM-TUM**. That's a pyrrhic and a spondee separated by a trochee.

Once you identify the kind of feet in a given line, there's one more step involved in scanning it. You need to figure out **the meter**, or number of feet in the line. The meter is counted with these prefixes:

*Mono = 1, Di = 2, Tri = 3, Tetra = 4, Penta = 5, Hexa = 6, Hepta = 7, Octa = 8, And so on.*

**The scansion** of a line is labeled by the adjectival form of the foot that composes it plus the word meter and the correct prefix.

Look at these lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

***If we shadows have offended,***

***Think but this and all is mended.(Ep.1-2)***

The rhythm of both lines goes:

***TUM-tee TUM-tee TUM-tee TUM-tee.***

That's four **trochees**, a "tetra" meter of **trochees**, or **trochaic tetrameter**.

Here is a line from *The Comedy of Errors*:

*Ay, when fowls have no feathers and fish have no fin.* (3.1.79)

The rhythm of the line is

***tee-tee-TUM tee-tee-TUM tee-tee-TUM tee-tee-TUM.***

That's four anapests, or ***anapestic tetrameter.***

### METRICAL STRESS VS. NATURAL STRESS

Clearly, no actor in her right mind would say "friends, ROM-ans COUNT-ry-MEN lend ME your EARS." Most actors would follow their instincts with these lines and say them much more naturally. Try it.

***FRIENDS, ROMans, COUNTrymen, LEND ME your EARS***

***TUM-TUM tee-TUM tee-tee TUM-TUM tee-TUM***

That's **spondee, iamb, pyrrhic, spondee, iamb.**

That's fine. While the scansion says the language is iambic pentameter, the natural instincts of most English speakers will make the rhythm something else, something less rigorously structured and free. In other words, there's a difference between the metric stress and the natural stress. Remember that scansion is a rhythmic framework, not a rhythmic straitjacket. There is plenty of maneuvering room within it.

***"There is a tide in the affairs of men,"*** says Brutus in Julius Caesar, ***"which, taken in the flood, leads on to fortune."*** The scansion says that for this to be iambic pentameter, the stresses must fall like this:

***there IS a TIDE in THE af-FAIRS of MEN which TAK-en AT the FLOOD leads ON to FORT-une***

But say the line out loud, as if you're telling someone how important is to seize opportunities in life:

***there is a TIDE in the afFAIRS of MEN which TAKen at the FLOOD LEADS ON to FORTune.***

***dee-dee dee-DUM dee-dee dee-DUM dee-DUM dee-DUM dee-dee dee-DUM DUM-DUM dee-DUM dee***

When these two lines are spoken naturally, they reveal not a regular and rigid march of ten ***iamb*s** but instead a funky arrangement of mostly ***iamb*s**, mixed in with some ***spondees*** and ***pyrrhics***. This interplay between metric and natural stress is like jazz. The drummer is the scansion. He keeps the beat going. The soloists are the actors speaking with natural stress. They improvise around the drumbeat, changing their own rhythms in counterpoint to the pattern. There is a word for this: syncopation.

Sources:

*"Thinking Shakespeare", Barry Edelstein*

## PART FOUR: HVSF PRODUCTION

### Note from the Director

*Hamlet* is probably Shakespeare's most famous work, the pre-eminent example of his understanding of humanity and his skill in crafting a tragedy that is both moving and entertaining. This play has been staged in practically every country and in every language on earth. It has been performed by some of the greatest actors of each generation for hundreds of years. A good argument for its continued life is that this play deals with an overabundance of fascinating human struggles: politics, revenge, love, legacy, parenthood, morality, and even theater. This is a play that is as complex as a human being, capable of mirroring the interests and needs of its audience.

For me though, beneath all of the rest this is a play about death.

I don't mean that this is a play about heaven or hell, it isn't about what happens to us when we die, it is about what happens to the survivors. It is a play about grief. It is a play about rage. It is a play about the paradox that the one thing that is utterly universal to all of humankind is that we will die, and yet each person struggles against the dying of the light in their own way. We pray and we tell stories, we build kingdoms and we write books, we struggle to live up to our parents and to pass ourselves down to our children.

*Hamlet* is a play that amidst all of its beautiful language, its sordid intrigue, and exciting violence it is asking us to take a moment and think about death. It is asking us to think about what we will leave behind in this world when we die. Will we leave this world better or worse, will there be monuments and castles raised to our name or simply a story to echo through time?

Hamlet asks himself, and us, many questions over the course of this play, but there is one line of his that always sticks with me:

"If it be, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all."

## About our Production

This most famous of Shakespeare's tragedies ends with a simple command from its eponymous hero: "tell my story," and the production takes this command to heart. So, our production of HAMLET will be a streamlined 90-minute experience designed to bring Shakespeare's unique language and theatricality to a younger audience at a scale that is both intimate and immediate. This is a play about young men and women struggling with loss and death, with the inescapable feeling that they don't fit into the world around them, and their struggles to come to terms with that. Our production will offer a young audience the opportunity to see themselves reflected in this famous language, to hear the echoes of their struggles in the struggles of Ancient Princes.

The conceit of the production itself will create a framework for the cut, in this frame the seven-person ensemble becomes Horatio and the troupe of Players hired by Hamlet in the play. These seven young artists are now travelling the world telling the story of their friend and comrade's death. The aesthetic will be that of an adaptation on the idea of a trunk show: simple and playful, contemporary and yet joyfully anachronistic as it becomes useful.

**Costuming** | a punk-rock aesthetic where the players may look more like roadies for a band than members of a royal court. There will be simple base costumes for all actors who will then layer on other pieces to designate a change in character, scene or status.

**Props** | road boxes and trunks will be used to house all the props and costume pieces on stage. Stretchers will be used for graves but will also be multi-purpose.

**Sound** | Our sound designer will work with the cast to compose the majority of the sound that will be created throughout the show. As such, much of the sound will be generated from the cast themselves, as well as considerable support digitally.

**Combat** | The production will use a more theatrical lens for death. The final duel will use wooden dowels in a kendo style fight.

**Additional** | The production will be very transparent about the "magic" of live theater. The actors will be seated on stage for the entire production and all costume changes etc. will be completely visible to the audience.

## DOUBLING

Have you ever been surprised when looking at your program at the end of a show to discover that two different characters had both been played by the same actor? That's called doubling. It happens all the time. For example, it is common for the Ghost of King Hamlet to double as the Player King in *Hamlet*. And many a production has doubled the characters of King Claudius and the The Ghost of King Hamlet, as well.

Doubling is an historical detail, and economic necessity, and a thematic tool. In Shakespeare's time the number of characters in a play always exceeded the number of actors in the company, so undoubtedly actors played more than one part. The evidence of printed cast lists bears out the commonsense assumption that each actor took several minor roles or else one or two major roles, thereby reducing, but not eliminating, the disproportion in the number of lines to be learnt. Where we know the parts doubled it seems that audience's valued actor virtuosity (displayed in pairing highly unlike characters) as well as thematic connections (displayed in pairing characters who share a characteristic or a dramatic function). Doubling was intrinsic to the actor's profession so only the company fool and the most important star had the opportunity to develop a specialty or type.

Our production of *Hamlet* is taking this concept of doubling quite seriously, and most if not all choices to have actors play multiple characters are in place to make thematic connections. Every character in our production but Hamlet is portrayed by six actors. This casting emphasizes the vital position that the melancholy Dane occupies in the action of the play, and simultaneously stresses the powerful influence that the two feuding families have over the star-crossed couple.

## CUTTING THE SCRIPT

Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival’s production of *Hamlet* has been cut down to 90 minutes. Below you will find some examples of cuts we have made to the script, and a short list of the differences between Shakespeare’s original version and ours.

### Hamlet : ORIGINAL TEXT VS. HVSF’S CUTTING

The Ghost Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Queen Gertrude King Claudius Polonius, father of Ophelia and Laertes, councilor to King Ophelia Laertes, her brother <del>Reynaldo, servant to Polonius</del> Horatio, Hamlet’s friend and confidant	<del>Voltemand</del> <del>Cornelius</del> Rosencrantz, courtier Guildenstern, courtier Osric, courtier <del>Gentleman</del> <del>A Lord</del> Francisco, Danish guard Barnardo, Danish guard Marcellus, Danish guard Fortinbras, Prince of Norway A Captain in Fortinbras’ army	<del>Ambassadors to Denmark from                  England</del> The Players <del>Two Messengers</del> <del>Sailors</del> Gravedigger Gravedigger’s companion <del>Doctor of Divinity</del> <del>Attendants, Lords, Guards,</del> <del>Musicians,</del> <del>Laertes’ Followers,</del> <del>Soldiers, Officers</del>
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### EXAMPLE FROM HVSF CUT SCRIPT

Act II, Scene 3

**Polonius.** How does my Good Lord Hamlet?

**Hamlet.** Well, God-a-mercy.

**Polonius.** Do you know me, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

**Polonius.** Not I, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Then I would you were so honest a man.

**Polonius.** Honest, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Ay sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

~~**Polonius.** That's very true, my lord.~~

~~**Hamlet.** For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?~~

**Polonius.** I have, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Let her not walk i'th'sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive - friend, look to't.

**Polonius.** [*aside*] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: ~~yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again.~~ What do you read my lord?

**Hamlet.** Words, words, words.

**Polonius.** What is the matter, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Between who?

**Polonius.** I mean the matter that you read, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Slanders, sir. For the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams - all which, sir, though I most powerfully potently believe, yet I hold it not honest to have it thus set down. For you yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am - if like a crab you could go backward.

**Polonius.** [*aside*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Into my grave?

**Polonius.** Indeed, that's out of the air. [*aside*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are - ~~a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him and my daughter.~~ My lord, I will take my leave of you.

**Hamlet.** You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will not more willingly part withal - except my life, except my life, except my life.

**Polonius.** Fare you well, my lord.

**Hamlet.** These tedious old fools.

**Comments:** *The cuts that have been made to Hamlet are mostly to reduce the running time of the production, but also to tighten the focus of the play, and support the energy and atmosphere of the director's vision.*



## WHAT TO WATCH FOR: Themes and Questions to Consider

1. How will this production stage the scenes with the Ghost? What kind sound/music, costuming, movement, and acting do you expect to see?
2. Is Hamlet (played by Jarrod Bates) ever truly mad? Watch for a moment when Hamlet's feigned madness crosses over to become the real thing. How will the actor communicate his character's unstable frame of mind to the audience?
3. There are eight deaths in Hamlet, not counting the murder of the old king that sets the revenge plot in motion. How does each character die? Do any of the characters bring about their own deaths in some way?
4. Watch for the way in which formal, ceremonial events fail or are left incomplete in the play: the first royal procession; the play-within-a-play; the burial of Ophelia; and the fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet. What happens in each instance to disrupt the event? Why might Shakespeare have wanted to create this pattern of uncompleted events in Hamlet?
5. In Shakespeare's time all the female roles would have been played by boys, and in our productions we have women playing parts traditionally portrayed by men. Bonnie Antosh plays a male role -- Horatio -- in this production. Does this cross-gender casting have an impact on the way you respond to the character's relationship to Hamlet?
6. Why do you think black and leather is the hands-down favorite choice of Costume Designers when it comes to dressing Prince Hamlet? Watch for ways in which costume pieces and props are used symbolically in this production.
7. What makes the character portrayals in the performance engage your emotions similarly or differently from reading the play, *Hamlet*?
8. How would you describe your perception of the characters as they appear on stage?
9. Who affects your feelings the most and why?
10. How would you discuss this production in relation to other stage or film versions of *Hamlet* that you may have seen?
11. What particular features make their rendering of the story different, distinct and/or special? Give examples from the production and other versions in order to illustrate and support your point of view.
12. In what way do the design elements of the production (set, costumes, lighting, sound track etc.) convey the world of the play?

13. How do they heighten, in your perception, its dramatic power, enhance the expression of emotions and the play's tragic intensity, and sustain the flow of action?
14. How do the costumes lend support to the specifics of the actors' interpretations of the characters?
15. In what way does the music engage you in watching the show? Think of your favorite scenes and talk about the role the musical score may have contributed to the overall result?
16. What is your response to the way fights are staged in the production? To what extent do the fights correspond to how you may have imagined the scenes when reading the text?
17. Discuss how, in the staging, all the production elements converge into a distinct theatrical interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. How do you think they contribute to the impact the tragedy has on you as the audience?

## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

As members of the audience, you play a very important part in the performance. Actors thrive on audience response; please encourage your students to laugh and applaud at appropriate moments. Some contemporary audiences have not been exposed to live performance and are accustomed to watching television and movies where eating, getting up from their seat and speaking loudly are acceptable. Please remind your students that the actors on stage are very aware of the audience's behavior and can become distracted from their performance.

Please review the following guidelines with your students prior to the performance.

- Eating and drinking are not permitted during the show.
- Please do not talk, whisper, shuffle or rattle papers or candy wrappers during the performance.
- Photography and audio and/or video recording are strictly prohibited by Actor's Equity regulations.
- Please turn off (or leave behind) all cell phones. The devices may interfere with the theatre's sound system and any ringing, alerts, etc. are extremely disruptive to both the audience and the actors.
- Please do not leave and re-enter the theatre during the performance. There is no intermission; the show will last for approximately 90 minutes.

## PART FIVE: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

### ACTIVITIES THAT FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

#### **Warming Up to *Hamlet***

**Focus:** a fun introduction to the language of the play and to basic interpretation.

Copy the phrases and lines from the Hamlet -- Famous Quotes page herein onto a number of cards, leaving out the names of the characters who speak them, and hand out a different card to each student. Ask the students to think about all the possible meanings of the phrase they have received and to experiment with all the possible ways it could be said, trying them as they walk around.

Then divide the students into small groups (4-6 people). Each group's task is to use the lines its members have been given to improvise a short scene, with any setting or characters they like, not necessarily from within the play. Any person can deliver any of the lines, and lines may be split up in any way the students wish, but very little adaptation or addition to the words on the cards is permitted. There can, however, be as much gesture and movement as they wish. Their final scene should make some kind of sense -- as if it were a fragment from a larger play.

#### **Where's My Line?**

**Focus:** -to become familiar with the major soliloquies in Hamlet; -finding meaning in the text in a non-threatening, hands-on way.

Divide the class into groups (5-6 people) and give each group a different soliloquy from Hamlet, cut into sections so that each group member has one piece of text, randomly distributed. The students do not show their texts to one another but must arrange themselves into the "right" order so that they make sense of the speech, assisted only by the speaking of the lines. The whole speeches are read to the rest of the class and compared with Shakespeare's text.

### ACTIVITIES THAT FOCUS ON CHARACTER

#### **Pass the Character**

**Focus:** Introduction to stock characters similar to those in Hamlet; -exploring the connection between props/costumes and character.

Bring in a box or bag in which you have assembled the following costume pieces and props: a love letter; a shovel; a crown; a small bottle marked "Poison"; a garland of flowers; a skull; a white sheet; a sword; and a set of prayer beads.

Make sure your students have what they need to get their responses down on paper before you let them see what you have brought in. As you take an object out, tell them what it is and give them 30 seconds to write down everything they can think of about the person to whom the object belongs.

When all of the objects have been introduced, divide the class into small groups (3-6 people) and assign one or two objects to each. Working together, the members of each group must come up with a detailed description of the character they associate with the object they have been given, including his or her occupation, social class, historical era and leisure pursuits. As well, the group must be prepared to show the rest of the class how the character walks and talks.

When each group has had the chance to teach the class about the characters they have created, including how to walk and talk like them, you are ready to improvise two-minute scenes with any three of them (and their props) onstage. Take suggestions for locations in which to set the scene and try different combinations of these characters each time. At any point the action may be frozen and the command, "Pass the character!" given. The actors must then exchange props/characters and continue with the scene in the new role

### **Collecting a Character**

**Focus:** A more experiential and sensory approach to interpreting character-laying the foundation for an understanding of the work of the designers.

Have your students create collections/anthologies to express their ideas about essential aspects of one of the characters in *Hamlet*. The project could include some or all of the following: poems; songs or instrumental music; sounds; still images -- drawings or photos, on their own or in a collage; an excerpt from a book or article; a color scheme; fabrics; abstract patterns; a scent or smell. Have them explain how each item in the collection fits in with their interpretation of their chosen character.

## **ACTIVITIES THAT FOCUS ON SCENE WORK**

### **Dumbshows**

**Focus:** -exploring alternate dramatic forms; -learning about key aspects of plot in *Hamlet* in a hands-on way.

The Elizabethan dumbshow was a dramatic form that used gestures, facial expressions and movement set to music to tell a simple story--but no dialogue; the shows were "dumb" in the sense that no speaking was permitted.

Divide the class into small groups (3-6 people) and have them develop and perform a dumbshow set to music of their choice based on one of the following situations drawn from events in *Hamlet*: a king is murdered by his own brother while he sleeps; the widow at a funeral becomes the bride at a wedding; a father's ghost appears to a son and tells him shocking news; a young girl is brutally rejected by the man she loves and loses her mind; a funeral is interrupted when two enemies quarrel at the grave; a duel between two young men is rigged in favour of one of them, but the plan backfires.

## ***Hamlet* Scene Checklist**

Objective: To allow students to block and perform a scene of *Hamlet*, without feeling the pressure to “act,” “block,” or “perform” a scene of Shakespeare.

1. Hand out scene checklist, or write one on the board (checklist sample listed below).
2. Explain the various elements of the checklist.
3. Give them 5-10 minutes to work on their scene.
4. Present scenes. As audience members, have students watch for how the other groups used the different elements of the checklist.
5. Discuss the scene work.
6. Summarize and tie together the work students have done on residency days, to send the students off feeling self-confident to approach Shakespeare in the future!

### Sample of a Scene Checklist

1. \_\_\_ A tableau at the beginning of the scene
2. \_\_\_ A tableau at the end of the scene
3. \_\_\_ An unexpected entrance or exit
4. \_\_\_ Someone must use a contemporary prop
5. \_\_\_ Someone must sit
6. \_\_\_ Someone must kneel
7. \_\_\_ One moment of unison movement
8. \_\_\_ At least 5 seconds of silence
9. \_\_\_ Someone must laugh
10. \_\_\_ Someone must cry
11. \_\_\_ Someone must shout

## *Hamlet* RESOURCES

### **Folger Shakespeare Library**

<http://www.folger.edu/>

### **PBS' "Shakespeare in the Classroom"**

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/>

### **The Kennedy Center's "The Poetics of Hip Hop"**

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-9-12/Poetics\\_of\\_Hip\\_Hop.aspx](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-9-12/Poetics_of_Hip_Hop.aspx)

### **California Shakespeare Theater**

<http://www.calshakes.org/v4/educ/pdf/Romeo+JulietTeachersGuide.pdf>

### **Royal Shakespeare Company**

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/>

<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schools/teachers/shakespeareunlocked/romeo.pdf>

### **Penguin**

<http://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/romeo.pdf>

### **Web English Teacher**

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/shakespeare.html>

### **Teach It English**

<http://www.teachit.co.uk/>

[https://www.teachit.co.uk/custom\\_content/free/22715\\_sample.pdf](https://www.teachit.co.uk/custom_content/free/22715_sample.pdf)

## Films

1948. Directed by and starring Laurence Olivier. 155 minutes.

1964. Richard Burton as Hamlet, directed by John Gielgud, filmed during a live performance on Broadway. 206 minutes

1969. Nicol Williamson as Hamlet, directed by Tony Richardson. 114 minutes

1979. Derek Jacobi as Hamlet, directed by Rodney Bennet for the BBC, Time Life Television as part of the series, "TheShakespeare Plays". 150 minutes

1990. Mel Gibson as Hamlet, directed by Franco Zeffirelli. 135 minutes

1996. Directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh. 238 minutes, with a 20 minute intermission

2000. Ethan Hawke as Hamlet, directed by Michael Almereyda, set in present day New York. 111 minutes

## Significant screen adaptations:

**Oh'Phelia** (UK, 1919) animated burlesque of the Hamlet story  
Anson Dyer director

**To Be or Not To Be** (USA, 1942) is the story of an acting company in 1939 Poland.  
Ernst Lubitsch director

**The Bad Sleep Well** (aka Warui yatsu hodo yoku nemuru) (Japan, 1960) is an adaptation of the Hamlet story set in corporate Japan.  
Akira Kurosawa director

**Acting Hamlet in the Village of Mrdusa Donja** (Yugoslavia, 1974) Entered into the 24th Berlin International Film Festival.  
Krsto Papić director

**To Be or Not To Be** (USA, 1983) is a remake of the Ernst Lubitsch film  
Mel Brooks director and as Frederick Bronski

**Strange Brew** (Canada, 1983), a comedy. Something is rotten in the Elsinore Brewery.  
Dave Thomas co-director and as Doug McKenzie  
Rick Moranis co-director and as Bob McKenzie

**Hamlet Goes Business** (Hamlet liikemaailmassa) (Finland, 1987).  
Aki Kaurismäki director

**Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead** (USA, 1990) film based on Tom Stoppard's stage play.  
Tom Stoppard director

**The Lion King** (USA, 1994) Disney's animated adaptation of the Hamlet story.  
Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff directors

**In The Bleak Midwinter** (aka "A Midwinter's Tale") (UK, 1996) tells the story of a group of actors performing Hamlet.  
Kenneth Branagh director

**The Banquet** (China, 2006)[citation needed]  
Feng Xiaogang, director

**Haider** (India, 2014) Hindi adaptation set in Kashmir.  
Vishal Bhardwaj, director

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