



# EDUCATOR GUIDEBOOK

William Shakespeare's HAMLET



THE NASHVILLE  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL

# LETTER FROM DIRECTOR NAT MCINTYRE



## HAMLET. OO WEE.

At first I was terrified to direct this play but as we began to work I realized why this play is not only considered to be Shakespeare's greatest play but also possibly the greatest play ever written.

The story of Hamlet is one of Shakespeare's most clear and, most importantly, seems to be relevant for almost any time. It is not only a story of revenge and betrayal, it is a story of a society that is falling apart and a reluctant leader who feels responsible to make it right no matter the cost.

Whatever your political or social background if you are human you can understand the frustration of a world around you that does not share your views. A world that treats certain people without respect or as a means simply to achieve power.

That is why we understand Hamlet's predicament. In our production David imagines a Hamlet who fights vigorously to act against a system that is stacked against him.

We see the costs of this noble fight and are forced to decide whether these costs are worth the resulting sacrifices to the people he loves and possibly even the downfall of an entire system.

What is great about this play and this question in our everyday lives is that there is no correct answer. So, enjoy and ask yourselves these questions knowing we have been struggling with them since the beginning of time.

## A NOTE FROM EDUCATION DIRECTOR KATIE BRUNO



Thank you so much for finding your way to NSF's Educator Guidebook for this co-production of HAMLET at Lipscomb University.

We hope you'll find that this material sparks conversation and curiosity for you and your students. It is my pleasure to create inspirational and exciting educational opportunities for Shakespeare enthusiasts in Nashville and beyond.

We welcome your feedback, questions, and comments to help keep Nashville Shakes accessible, innovative, and fun!

Please feel free to email me at [Katie@nashvilleshakes.org](mailto:Katie@nashvilleshakes.org) or call our office at 615-255-2273!



## WHAT TO EXPECT AT COLLINS AUDITORIUM

Willard Collins Alumni Auditorium on Lipscomb University's campus is a traditional proscenium stage theater seating over 700 people. It has orchestra seating and one balcony. An usher will show you to your seats and answer any questions.

The performance will begin promptly at 10:00 AM and conclude around 12:00 noon. There will be one ten-minute intermission. This is the appropriate time to use the restroom. When the lights flicker, it's time to return to your seats as quickly and as quietly as possible for the remainder of the performance.

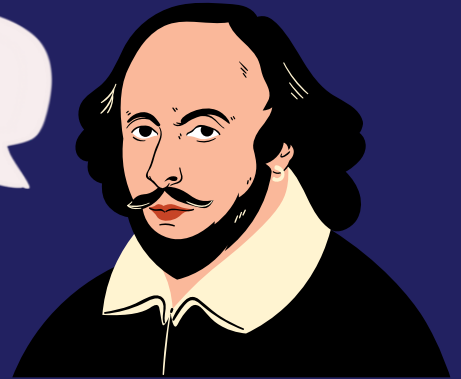
Please remain respectful to the actors and your fellow audience members throughout the performance and kindly turn off and put away all cell phones before the show begins. Ushers will ask you to put them away if they see devices in use during the performance. Also, please remain in your seats and refrain from talking or whispering while the show is in progress.

Remember: The actors can see and hear you just as well as you can see and hear them! Immediately after the performance, you will have an opportunity for a Talkback Question-and-Answer session with the actors and crew. Our cast and technicians are eager to answer your questions about the play, Shakespeare, and careers in the theatre! Your teachers and NSF staff will be nearby and give you instructions should any emergency arise. Following the performance and Talkback, follow instructions from your teachers to safely exit the theater and return to school with your group.



# ATTENDING LIVE THEATER

To do, or not to do...



## How it works:

The performance will begin promptly at 10:00 AM and conclude around 12:00 noon. There will be one ten-minute intermission. This is the appropriate time to use the restroom. When the lights flicker, it's time to return to your seats as quickly and as quietly as possible for the remainder of the performance.



- Clap
- Laugh
- Actively listen
- Pay attention
- Food in Lobby



- Whispering, talking, screaming
- Cell phones
- Food in the theater

## How audiences should act:

Please remain respectful to the actors and your fellow audience members throughout the performance. Kindly turn off and put away all cell phones before the show begins. Ushers will ask you to put them away if they see devices in use during the performance. Also, please remain in your seats and refrain from talking or whispering while the show is in progress.

**Remember: The actors can see and hear you just as well as you can see and hear them!**

Immediately after the performance, you will have an opportunity for a Talkback Question-and-Answer session with the actors and crew. Our cast and technicians are eager to answer your questions about the play, Shakespeare, and careers in the theatre!

Your teachers and NSF staff will be nearby and give you instructions should any emergency arise. Following the performance and Talkback, follow instructions from your teachers to safely exit the theater and return to school with your group.

# SYNOPSIS

While Hamlet is away at University, his father dies, and his mother marries his uncle Claudius (his father's brother). It all happens so fast that Hamlet is not able to return for his father's funeral or his mother's wedding (not that he would have loved attending that affair). Late one night after Hamlet has returned, guards (Bernardo and Marcellus) of Denmark's Elsinore castle are met by Prince Hamlet's best friend, Horatio. The guards describe a ghost they have seen that resembles Hamlet's father (also called Hamlet), the recently deceased king. At that moment, the Ghost reappears, and the guards and Horatio decide to tell Hamlet.

Claudius has now become the new King of Denmark without election because he married Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Hamlet continues to mourn his father's death and laments his mother's lack of loyalty. When Hamlet hears of the Ghost from Horatio, he wants to see it for himself.

Elsewhere, the royal attendant Polonia says farewell to her son Laertes, who is departing for France. Laertes warns his sister, Ophelia, away from Hamlet and thinking too much of his attention towards her because he cannot choose who he marries and could very easily end up hurting her and ruining her reputation.

Hamlet meets Horatio and the guards to try and see his father's ghost. The Ghost appears to Hamlet, claiming indeed to be the ghost of his father. He tells Hamlet about how Claudius murdered him, and Hamlet swears vengeance for his father. Hamlet decides to feign madness while he tests the truth of the Ghost's allegations (always a good idea in such situations).

With spies everywhere Hamlet begins to act very strangely. He cruelly rejects Ophelia while Claudius and Polonia spy on him. They had hoped to find the reason for Hamlet's sudden change in behavior but could not. Claudius summons Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, old friends of Hamlet to find out what's got into him. Their arrival coincides with a group of traveling actors that Hamlet happens to know and love very well. Hamlet writes a play that includes scenes that mimic the murder of Hamlet's father. He will use this play to see if Claudius reacts.

## SYNOPSIS (CONT.)

The play provokes Claudius, and he interrupts the action by attacking a player and storming out. Hamlet is now convinced he is guilty. Claudius immediately decides to send Hamlet away. Hamlet is summoned by his distressed mother, Gertrude, and on the way, he happens upon Claudius kneeling and attempting to pray. Hamlet reasons that killing the King now would only send his soul to heaven rather than hell. Hamlet decides to spare his life for the time being until he can kill him while he is stained with sin.

Polonia hides in Gertrude's room to protect her from her unpredictable son. When Hamlet arrives to scold his mother, he hears Polonia moving behind the arras (a kind of tapestry) and thinks it is King Claudius. He stabs the tapestry and, in so doing, kills Polonia. The ghost of Hamlet's father reappears and warns his son not to delay revenge or upset his mother.

Hamlet is sent to England, supposedly to recover from madness, but on his journey Hamlet discovers Claudius has a plan to have him killed once he arrives. He returns to Denmark alone, sending his companions Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths in his place.

Rejected by Hamlet, Ophelia is now desolate at the loss of her father. With a brother bent on revenge and no one to turn to, Ophelia goes mad and drowns. On the way back to Denmark, Hamlet meets Horatio in the graveyard (along with two gravediggers), where they see Ophelia's funeral procession arrives at the very same graveyard. Hamlet confronts Laertes, Ophelia's brother, who has taken his mother's place at the court.

A duel is arranged between Hamlet and Laertes. During the match, Claudius conspires with Laertes to kill Hamlet. They plan that Hamlet will die either on a poisoned rapier or with poisoned wine. The plans go awry when Gertrude unwittingly drinks from the poisoned cup and dies. Then, both Laertes and Hamlet are wounded by the poisoned blade, and Laertes dies.

Hamlet, in his death throes, kills Claudius. Hamlet dies, leaving only his friend Horatio to explain the truth and begin to pick up the mess of this destroyed society.

# MEET THE CAST

Or, Dramatis Personae, in Latin.



THE NASHVILLE  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL

# Hamlet



LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY  
GEORGE SHINN COLLEGE of  
ENTERTAINMENT & THE ARTS



**Hamlet**  
David Long III



**Ophelia**  
Cleo Graham



**Laertes**  
Alex Dee



**Horatio**  
Regan Mills



**Rosencrantz**  
Rachel Penner



**Guildenstern**  
Connor Adair



**Player**  
Olivia Eley



**Player**  
Emma Ramsey



**Player King/Priest**  
Bryce Dunn



**Player Queen**  
Abigail Williams



**Osric/Ens.**  
Marian C. Barber



**Voltimand/Ens**  
Annie McMurrian



THE NASHVILLE  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL





THE NASHVILLE  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL

# Hamlet



LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY  
GEORGE SHINN COLLEGE of  
ENTERTAINMENT & THE ARTS



**Bernardo/Ens.**  
Aubrey Bagley



**Marcellus/Ens.**  
Nathan Price Mann



**King's Spy/Ens.**  
Sofia Hernandez  
Morales



**King's Spy/Ens.**  
Téa Doherty



**King's Spy/Ens.**  
Aleia Eagleton



**King's Spy/Reynaldo**  
Brock Loyd



**Young Gravedigger/Ens.**  
Sh'Ahr Blackburn



**Polonia/1st Gravedigger**  
Denice Hicks



**Claudius**  
D. Scott Baker\*



**Gertrude**  
Shannon Hoppe



**Player 1/3rd Gravedigger**  
Claire Hopkins

**\*Member AEA**

\*Understudies not pictured.

# Understudies

HAMLET.....Lorenzo Rivera  
OPHELIA.....Sofia Hernandez  
LAETRES.....James Wier  
HORATIO.....Tea Doherty  
ROSENCRANTZ.....Makinley Smith  
GUILDENSTERN.....Bryce Dunn  
Ensemble Swing.....Anna Jones  
POLONIA.....Elanah Bruce  
CLAUDIUS.....Max Hunkler  
GERTRUDE.....Abi Williams  
Professional Ensemble.....Emily Stempens

Photo by Sarah Johnson of D. Scott Baker as Claudius.





# Set Design

## Explained by Lipscomb Professor and Designer Andy Bleiler

The set design for HAMLET was inspired by the work of two great designers from the early 20th century, Adolphe Appia, and Edward Gordon Craig. These two designers broke the conventions of painted illusion and instead designed three-dimensional spaces for the actors to inhabit. This production is a nod to that concept.

Additionally, the set is also a model of sustainable practices. The flats used for the walls and platforming that creates the different levels, as well as all the other components of the set, are all recycled from past productions. In a few circumstances where new materials were needed, they were sourced from sustainably harvested materials.

The architectural elements at the tops of the walls are made from paper mache rather than rigid Styrofoam. This is a practice centuries old, yet often overlooked today. The idea behind using this method is to create scenic pieces that can be reused, and eventually, at the end of their useful life, be composted rather than being sent to a landfill. In this spirit of reducing our impact, that will insure there will be resources available for the next generation of theatre artists.



Lipscomb Students using paper mache.

# Set Design in Process







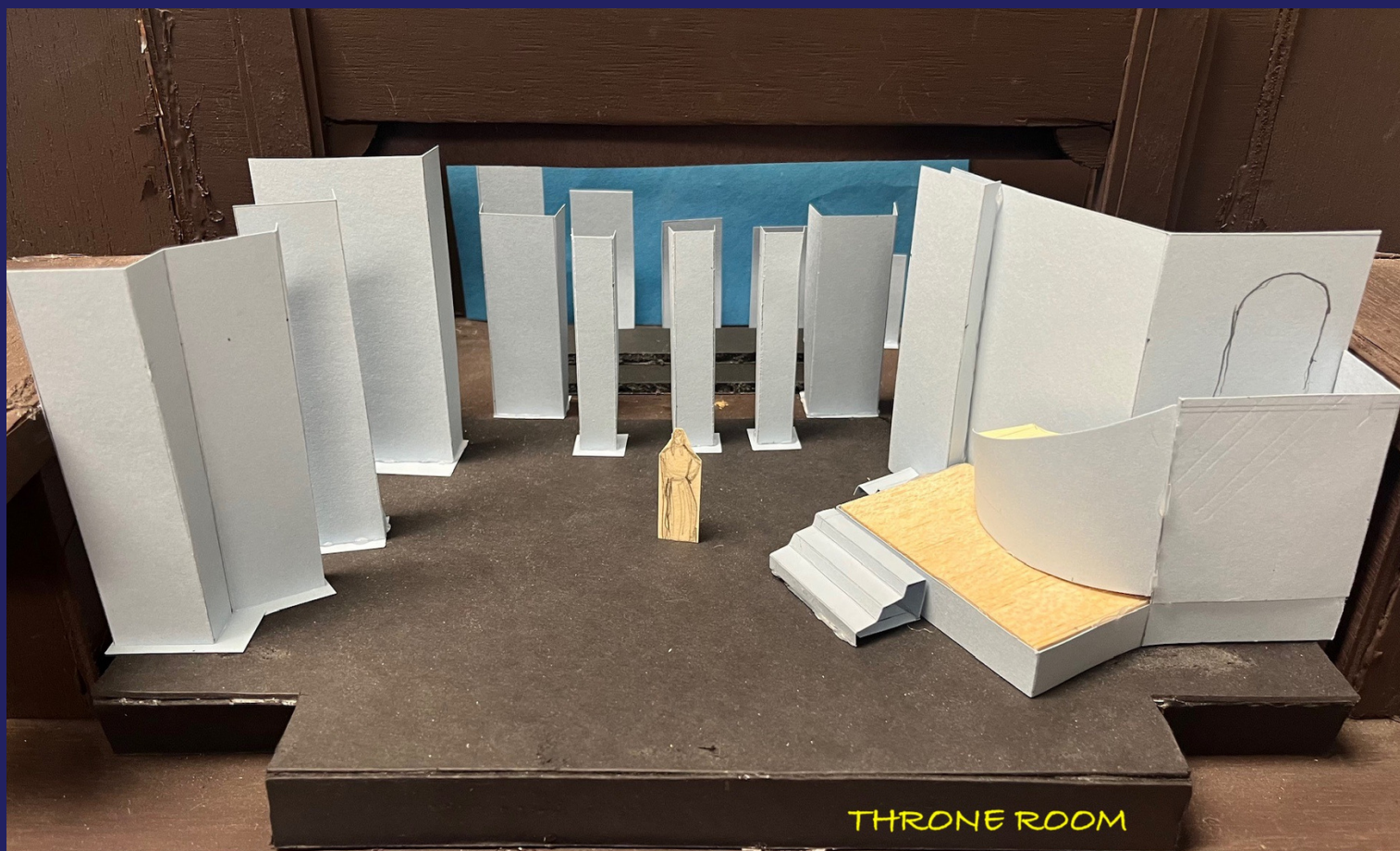
Professor Bleiler working in the shop with students.





GRAVE DIGGERS  
FRONT VIEW

Set Design Models: Designers build models to help share their vision for the physical world of the play with the rest of the production team.



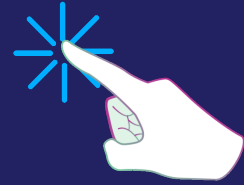
THRONE ROOM



# Costume Design

By Lipscomb University's Resident Costume Designer, June Kingsbury

TAP HERE for an awesome  
article about HAMLET's  
costume design.



This photo features a vest made out of ties from the collection of late Morris P. Landiss, a beloved Lipscomb University professor.



June Kingsbury and students work in the costume shop.





# Hair and Makeup

Designed by Andrea Hernandez

## The World of the Play

Late/Medieval/Early Renaissance

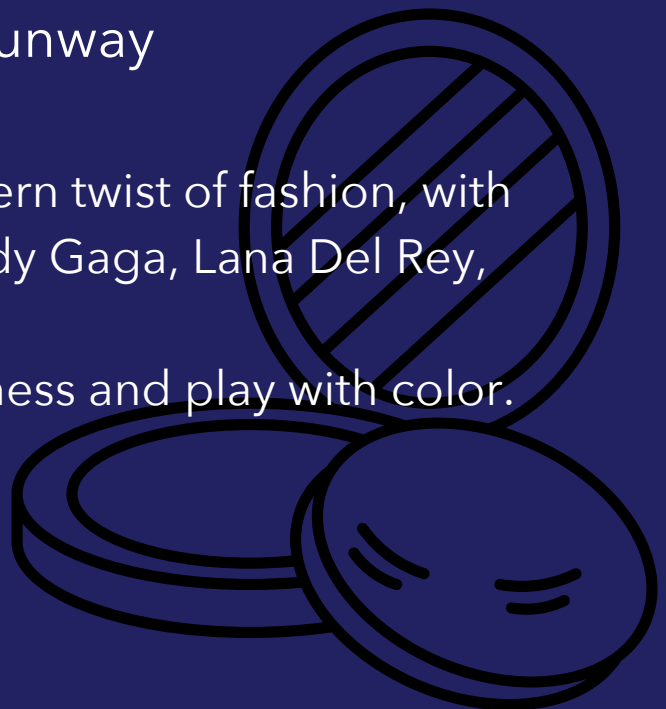
- Hair during this time had a visible significance to status and occupation.
- We see braids, long hair, beards, and loose hair with jewelry within it.
- Hair told a story.

**[CLICK HERE TO SEE ANDREA'S RESEARCH](#)**

## Avant Garde Runway

We will also incorporate the modern twist of fashion, with some inspiration from Lorde, Lady Gaga, Lana Del Rey, etc...

These artists incorporate an edginess and play with color.



# Fight Choreography

An interview with HAMLET fight choreographer Carrie Brewer



## What makes for a great stage fight?

A great stage fight has many elements, but most of all, it has to be rooted in the story and characters. Audiences will care less about fancy moves than they will about characters that are fully emotionally invested and in danger.

A GREAT FIGHT OFTEN HAS:

- Engaging musicality or a “soundtrack” of breath, vocal reactions, weapons, clashing, etc...
- A twist or surprise element introduced--sometimes written into the play itself
- High believability (successfully executed illusion of attacks/ pain reactions)
- High level of safety for the actors while still seeming “dangerous” to the audience

## What challenges does this play present in terms of stage violence?

Casting. Hamlet and Laertes not only have to be excellent actors, but have to be very physical actors who can sword fight well. Their fight at the end is extensive and requires a lot of skill.

## What is something most people don't realize about stage combat/choreography work?

The more relaxed you are, the better. Tension is the enemy.

## What was your favorite thing about working on this production?

I really enjoy the mix of professional and student actors. The bar is high and the commitment level from everyone in the room is inspiring! It's great to be a part of it all!

# Dramaturgy

**Definition: The theory and practice of dramatic composition.**

Click on the photo below to read an excerpt on Themes and Symbols from the dramaturgy packet for this production, assembled by Lipscomb student Erynn Barrett.



Photo by Sarah Johnson featuring David Long III as HAMLET and Cleo Delany as Ophelia.

# SHAKESPEARE'S TIMELINE

- 1558** Queen Elizabeth ascends to the throne.
- 1564** April 23, birth of William Shakespeare, in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1572-76** Formation of theater companies in London and building of The Theatre by James Burbage, the first free-standing commercial theatre.
- 1579** Sir Thomas North's translation of PLUTARCH'S LIVES published; Shakespeare's major source for JULIUS CAESAR and other Roman plays.
- 1582** Marriage of Anne Hathaway and William Shakespeare.
- 1583** Susanna Shakespeare born.
- 1585** Twins Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare born.
- 1586-88(?)** Sometime in the late 1580s, most likely, Shakespeare leaves Stratford-upon-Avon for London, perhaps with a company of players.
- 1590** Shakespeare appears to be writing plays by this time. Early plays include THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, THE COMEDY OF ERRORS, and HENRY VI, Parts 1, 2, 3.
- 1592** Plague closes London theaters; Shakespeare turns to writing verse.
- 1595-96** Likely date of staging of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. ROMEO AND JULIET likely written and staged about the same time.
- 1598-99** The Burbages and Shakespeare and others finance the building of the Globe Theater on the south bank of the Thames, just outside the city of London. JULIUS CAESAR, HENRY V, and AS YOU LIKE IT may have been among the plays to open the Globe Theatre.
- 1603** Queen Elizabeth dies; James the VI of Scotland ascends the throne of England and becomes James I of England. James becomes the patron of Shakespeare's theater company (now known as "The King's Men").
- 1605-06** KING LEAR likely written; first record of court performance is Christmas 1606.
- 1606** MACBETH likely written; perhaps written almost the same time as KING LEAR.
- 1612-14** Shakespeare "retires" to Stratford; however, he continues to collaborate with others writing plays.
- 1616** April 23, Shakespeare dies and is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1623** First Folio—a collected "coffee table" edition of 37 plays—published by Shakespeare's fellow actors, John Hemings and William Condell.



Photo by Sarah Johnson featuring David Long III as HAMLET.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR AFTER PERFORMANCE

- What new questions do you have about the characters and their story?
- How did the design of the production (lighting, costumes, scenery, music and sound, etc.) help tell the story?
- Do you relate to any of the characters? How? Why? Discuss these ideas with your friends and your teachers!
- How and why is this play relevant?



# READING A PLAY IN THE CLASSROOM

## *Nashville Shakespeare Festival's Shakespeare Allowed model*

Often a simple exercise of reading key scenes aloud can make Shakespeare's words meaningful. The Nashville Shakespeare Festival sponsors a Shakespeare Allowed round-table read of a play the first Saturday of each month at the main Nashville Public Library. In this format, everyone at the table (or in a desk in a classroom) reads in sequence, rather than taking roles. Everyone participates and gets to try his or her hand at reading the text. Teachers may emphasize that the effort is primary. Teachers can select a scene or short segment to read aloud as an exercise to lay the groundwork for a class discussion or another class activity.

## *Staged readings model*

Students with limited exposure to or experience with theater can benefit from an effort to read a scene or segment of a play aloud, using basic blocking and interaction among roles. In this model, students select a scene or part of a scene (~ 50 lines makes a good length) to read in roles. Working with their classmates, they can decide upon a few simple movements to dramatize the action. The emphasis is on students' making sense of the language and beginning to envision how interactions are shown on stage. Thus, rehearsal time should be short (15-20 minutes), and the students can rehearse and stage the scenes in one class period. One effective strategy is to have two groups of students stage the same scene, and invite the class members to comment on differences.

## *Creating multi-vocal readings of poetry and passages*

Help students develop a sense of meaning and of shifts in tone or poetic diction by having students work in groups of 3-4 to read a single passage. This project can begin with a sonnet; a typical Shakespearean sonnet divides along quatrains (4 lines, with rhyme) and ends with a couplet: 4- 4- 4- 2. Students can decide pace, inflection, emphasis, and tone. Ask students to think of themselves as a jazz group, or a quartet, or a rap group, using their voices to convey meaning.



# SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

*Write/blog/podcast your review!*



Productions of all kinds are regularly reviewed in the mainstream media, on blogs, in specialty publications, and in conversation. A formal review needs to present a justification for its rating of a production. Create a rating, and then, in a page or so, provide your justification. You may enjoy debating a classmate, as Siskel and Ebert used to do about movies.

- Using stars or another image, provide a rating of this production.
- Because not all readers of your review have seen the play, provide a brief plot overview and the basic details about the production.
- List, with explanations, the three main reasons for your judgment. These should focus on this specific production (casting, acting, set design, costume, concept, clarity of language and action, music, and lighting).
- Cite at least three specific moments in the production that support your judgement. Discuss the themes or issues that this play and this production raise for an audience.
- Conclude by considering the value of this production or of theater in general. If you have aspirations to be an artist of any kind, consider what a reviewer might say that would enable you to grow as an artist.

# MORE ONLINE RESOURCES

Internet Shakespeare (many of these editions have been edited, making them among the most reliable on the internet): [link here](#)

Folger Shakespeare Library (text plus additional resources): [link here](#)

Open Source Shakespeare: [link here](#)

Shakespeare Resource Center (a good, general info site for Shakespeare): <http://www.bardweb.net/index.html>

Ted-Ed YouTube Video: [link here](#)

Royal Shakespeare Company: [link here](#)

PBS Learning Media: [link here](#)

BBC Teach Videos: [link here](#)

## USEFUL RESOURCES ON SHAKESPEARE'S BIOGRAPHY

Bate, Jonathan. *Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare*. New York: Random House, 2010.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Schoenbaum, Samuel. *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975.

Folger Shakespeare Library: <http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/faqs.html>



# ABOUT THE NASHVILLE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

The mission of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival is to educate and entertain the Mid-South community through professional theatrical experiences.

The Festival enriches and unifies our community with bold, innovative and relevant productions along with empowering, participatory educational programs, setting the community standard of excellence in educational outreach and performances of Shakespeare's plays.

The Festival will host Summer Shakespeare 2024, featuring William Shakespeare's AS YOU LIKE IT, at OneC1TY in Nashville and Academy Park in Franklin. The Festival also sponsors numerous workshops, educational outreach programs, and public events.

**[www.nashvilleshakes.org](http://www.nashvilleshakes.org)**

**Facebook: The Nashville Shakespeare Festival**

**Instagram/Twitter: @nashvilleshakes**

## NSF APPRENTICE COMPANY

ApCo training is an intensive for aspiring theatre lovers age 13+ led by the Executive Artistic Director and Education Director, along with guest artists hired from the professional talent in Nashville. Apprentices receive over 70 hours of performance training in movement, voice and diction, acting, text analysis, and character work, and then perform supporting roles in the Summer Shakespeare production. Visit our website for more details!



# THANK YOU TO OUR HAMLET SPONSORS

## Event Sponsors



## Season Sponsors



## Student Ticket and Workshop Underwriting



**Eric Cook  
and Jason  
Somerville**

## Media Sponsors







# A BIG STAGE FOR BIG DREAMS

Creativity comes to life at Belmont University, with top-ranked programs in the arts, theatre, music, film and design. Now, with the opening of the extraordinary Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, there's no better time for the creative community to engage with all Belmont has to offer.

LEARN MORE AT  
[BELMONT.EDU/CREATIVECOMMUNITY](http://BELMONT.EDU/CREATIVECOMMUNITY)

**The  
Fisher  
Center**



**Join us for live events  
and performances**

Tickets on sale at [thefishercenter.com](http://thefishercenter.com)

