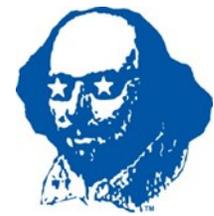


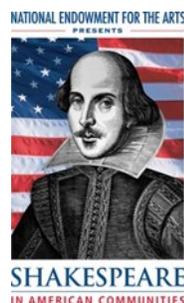
The Nashville Shakespeare Festival



EDUCATOR'S GUIDEBOOK



Shakespeare's existentialist masterpiece explores filial relationships and mental illness, while illustrating the full range of human behaviors from wretched cruelty to perfect love. The Nashville Shakespeare Festival presents the first full professional production of this play to be seen in Nashville in over 100 years. This is a wonderful opportunity to see a rarely produced and alarmingly relevant play.



Education Sponsor:



This production is part of Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with Arts Midwest.

Table of Contents

[What to expect at the performance](#)

[Synopsis of the play](#)

[Who's Who in the Cast](#)

[Dr. Larry Brown's *King Lear* website](#)

[Shakespeare's Life—A Brief Timeline](#)

[King Lear—a brief overview](#)

[Reading the Play in the Classroom](#)

[King Lear: The Family Context](#) (with Class Activities)

[King Lear: The Social Context](#) (with Class Activities)

[King Lear: The Fool and Folly](#) (with Class Activities)

[King Lear: Language and Setting](#) (with Class Activities)

[Concepts of Tragedy](#) (with Class Activities)

[You Are the Critic: class activity](#)

[Shakespeare's Ups and Downs, Dr. Anne Jennalie Cook](#)

[Shakespeare's First Folio in Nashville](#)

[Tennessee English/Language Arts Standards](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

[About the Nashville Shakespeare Festival](#)

[Troutt Theater Information](#)

[Sponsors](#)

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE TROUTT THEATER

The Troutt Theater on the Belmont University campus is a traditional proscenium stage theater seating approximately 300 people. The floor is raked, so all seats have a good view of the stage. The buses will drop you off at the front entrance to the building; you will go up one flight of stairs or use the elevator to take you to the second floor entrance to the theater.

The production will begin promptly at 10 AM and conclude around 12 noon. Immediately after the production, you will have an opportunity for a Question and Answer session with the actors.

King Lear is a powerful and moving play. It will require your full attention and no audience member will regret the time spent immersed in this play. To make for a good experience for all participants, audience members are asked to turn off and put away all cell phones and digital devices, to avoid talking or whispering, and to remain in seats throughout the performance. Your teachers and NSF staff will be nearby in case any emergency arises.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE PERFORMANCE

Notice the set as soon as the lights come up. Keep an eye on changes in the set and lighting as the play progresses.

Costuming will help you identify the actors and roles. Lear's three daughters will each wear a different color. Gloucester's two sons will also be dressed in different colors.

The action in the first half of the play takes place in large, drafty castles (think Downton Abbey without electricity), and in the second half mainly in the wilds near the shoreline of England and on battlefields. Think about which setting seems to help human beings be more honest with each other.

A map of Britain will be projected behind the stage so that audience members can follow the locations of the action.

This play is a tragedy, and thus you can expect the cliché ending that "everyone dies." While this is true and students need to be prepared for this ending, it is also an ending that shows that gaining wisdom is possible, at any age, and that parent-child love can weather any storm.

King Lear Synopsis

By Don Jones

King Lear opens with a jovial court scene in Britain of ancient times. The venerable king intends to divide his lands and his power between his three daughters: Goneril, married to the Duke of Albany, Regan, married to the Duke of Cornwall and Cordelia, unmarried but potentially betrothed to either the Duke of Burgundy or the King of France. Unexpectedly, the king asks each daughter to publically profess her love for him before receiving her share of his wealth. Goneril and Regan play the game with the florid language he desires. But his youngest and favorite daughter, Cordelia, demurs. She claims, as honestly as she can, that she can love the king as a daughter should and no more. She refuses to play the game. Infuriated, Lear disowns her and offers her two suitors a wife without a dowry. Burgundy refuses. The King of France, moved by her bravery and her honesty, contends that her dowry is herself and agrees to marry her. Kent, a counselor in Lear's court, feels as if he must confront the king honestly because he is making a devastating mistake both as a father to Cordelia and, indeed, to the country over which he has reigned. Becoming even further infuriated by his insubordination, Lear banishes Kent and threatens death if he is seen again. Angrily, Lear divides the entire country between Goneril and Regan and their respective husbands.

In a secondary plot, Lear's trusted advisor Gloucester is manipulated by his illegitimate son, Edmund, into believing that his legitimate son, Edgar intends to murder him and obtain his fortune and lands. Edgar flees to avoid execution and Edmund's machinations shift into full-blown but undetected treason.

Lear makes his first trip without power to Goneril's home and is found to be unwelcome because he brings 100 knights and much ribaldry and unrest. Infuriated by Goneril's objections to his behavior and company, Lear, his fool and Kent (who now is disguised) leave Goneril's home; but not before Lear has upbraided her and has sworn to have nothing to do with her ungrateful self.

Lear and his followers leave to visit Regan who, in alliance with her sister, also rejects Lear and his knights. Now, even further infuriated and bordering on madness, Lear, his fool, and the disguised Kent leave in the midst of a violent storm. Railing to the heavens, Lear is beginning to realize he has lost everything, including his sanity. They find shelter in a hovel where Edgar, now disguised as Tom O'Bedlam (himself feigning insanity for his safety) is also hiding. The madmen and the fool hold a mock trial for Goneril and Regan in the middle of the storm.

In the meantime, Edmund also turns on his father and gives information seen as treasonous to Regan and her husband Cornwall, who apprehend Gloucester and viciously gouge out his eyes. Goneril and Regan join forces to finally defeat their father and rid themselves of his presence. But Cordelia, along with the King of France and his armies make plans to attack the sisters' forces and return the kingdom to Lear.

Edgar finds his father, Gloucester, blinded and in an act of kindness and brilliance, makes him believe that he's leapt from the cliffs of Dover and amazingly, survived. Cordelia reunites with a broken down and dying Lear and reconciliation seems possible. But in a tragic turn of events, Cordelia's forces lose the war and both she and Lear are captured. In an effort to find favor with Edmund, Goneril poisons Regan. Edgar confronts his conniving brother, Edmund, and in a sword fight fatally wounds him. Goneril commits suicide. Albany attempts to free Lear and Cordelia, but for Cordelia, it is too late. Edmund had ordered her execution. Lear, broken-hearted and defeated, dies.

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST



King Lear (David Landon) Aging King of Britain who decides to divide his kingdom among his daughters. The consequences of this division lead to family disintegration and civil war, and Lear's own exploration of his personal and political identity.



Earl of Kent (David Compton) Nobleman loyal to Lear, banished for his disagreeing with Lear's rejection of Cordelia. He returns in disguise as Caius and serves Lear loyally.



Goneril (Nettie Kraft) King Lear's eldest daughter, and initially the inheritor of half his lands. She becomes allies with Regan to deprive Lear of the remainder of his powers. Married to the Duke of Albany, she nonetheless pursues a liaison with Edmund.



Duke of Albany (Craige Hoover) Husband to Goneril, later estranged from her.



Regan (Shannon Hoppe) Lear's middle daughter, who allies herself with Goneril against Lear and his followers. Married to the Duke of Cornwall, who is killed, she then competes with Goneril for Edmund's hand.



Duke of Cornwall (Michael Roark) Husband to Regan; assassinated by a servant after blinding the Earl of Gloucester.



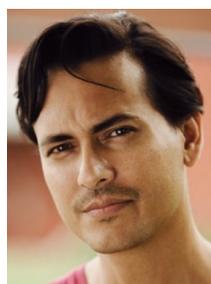
Cordelia (Amanda Card) Lear's youngest daughter, initially favored but then banished when she does not respond as Lear expects in the opening scene. The King of France values her and marries her; she returns to Britain to attempt to support Lear and defeat her sisters.



King of France (Jonah Jackson) The husband of Cordelia, who marries her for her virtue, without requiring a dowry.



Earl of Gloucester (Brian Russell) Nobleman loyal to Lear who becomes the victim of deception by his bastard son Edmund; later blinded by Cornwall.



Edmund (Santiago Sosa) Younger illegitimate son to the Earl of Gloucester, he attempts to gain an inheritance from his father by claiming, falsely, that Edgar planned to kill the Earl. Aligns himself with Goneril and Regan and becomes the Earl of Gloucester, but is challenged by Edgar to a duel.



Edgar (Matt Garner) Elder son to the Earl of Gloucester, he remains loyal to his father, despite his father's rejection of him based on Edmund's false information. He escapes Edmund's plot by disguising himself as "Poor Tom" the Bedlam beggar, and later challenges Edmund to a duel.



Fool (Becky Wahlstrom) A professional comedian, whose role was to provide levity for a nobleman or court; Lear's fool is close enough to Lear to offer pointed advice and insight, and to suffer with Lear in the rain. The Fool disappears, apparently dying, after the rainstorm on the heath.



Oswald (Chris Rushing) Steward to Goneril, who serves as messenger between Goneril and Regan; killed by Edgar as he delivers a message about the return of Cordelia.



Curan (Scout Pittman) Servant to Gloucester who is present when Gloucester's eyes are put out by Cornwall; retaliates by killing Cornwall, and then is killed by Regan.



Duke of Burgundy (Taylor Novak) Suitor to Cordelia, who yields her to France when he finds out she will have no dowry.

FULL ONLINE *KING LEAR* TEXT WITH COMMENTARY

Dr. Larry Brown, Professor of Theater at David Lipscomb University, maintains a website on *King Lear*. This extremely useful website includes the following:

Full text with commentary on major portions

Description of the two texts: Folio and Quarto

Extended essay on the play as tragedy

(For classes also doing *The Crucible* this year: Professor Brown's discussion of tragedy includes Arthur Miller's "Tragedy and the Common Man" and comments on *The Crucible*.)

http://larryavisbrown.homestead.com/files/lear/lear_home.htm

SHAKESPEARE’S LIFE—A BRIEF 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.
- 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
- 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
- 1612-14 Shakespeare likely “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

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.

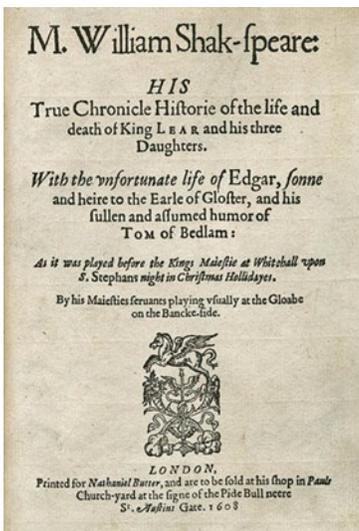
Folger Shakespeare Library website: <http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>

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

KING LEAR: A NOTE ON SOURCES AND EARLY TEXTS

King Lear is first mentioned in the performance records for the court of James I for Christmas season, 1606. This record leads scholars to believe that Shakespeare wrote the play in 1605-06. Perhaps the play was produced at the Globe Theater prior to court production; perhaps it had its debut at the court—we have no definitive record. A play titled *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three daughters* was published in 1605, and scholars think this may have been the same play which was staged (not by Shakespeare's company) in the early 1590s. Shakespeare was familiar with this play text and likely its earlier production. He was also familiar with the accounts of the story of Lear and his kingship in Ralph Holinshed's *Chronicles of England* (1577, 1587), which he used for his history plays; in *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), also a source he used for his history plays; and in Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* ((2.10.27-33) 1590). He may have picked up the idea for the Gloucester subplot from Sir Philip Sidney's tale of a king and his sons in his prose romance, *Arcadia* (1590, 1593, 1598). The language of Edgar in disguise as Poor Tom is drawn largely from an anti-exorcism treatise by Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, published in 1603. Also, an unusual case may have brought the Lear story to the fore: the eldest daughter of Brian Annesley, a wealthy gentleman, attempted to have him declared insane in order to gain the inheritance; her suit was opposed by the youngest daughter, named, interestingly enough, Cordell, who was declared the heir in 1604 upon the death of Annesley.

One striking adaptation that Shakespeare makes to the history and legends of King Lear is to make it fully tragic—Lear and Cordelia do not die in the other accounts. Shakespeare's first audience must have been shocked to face a dead Cordelia and dying Lear in the last scene of the play. Indeed, that ending was reversed in the adaptation of Nahum Tate, whose version of the play held the stage from 1681-1838.



Shakespeare's play was first published as a quarto, a "paperback edition," in 1608. The play was included in the First Folio in 1623. Because there are some significant differences in some scenes of the play (though not in the overall cast or plot), some scholars ponder whether the quarto or folio might represent a process of revision on Shakespeare's part.

READING THE PLAY IN THE CLASSROOM

Nashville Shakespeare Festival's Shakespeare Aloud model:

Often a simple exercise of reading key scenes aloud can make Shakespeare's words meaningful. The Nashville Shakespeare Festival sponsors a Shakespeare Aloud 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.

SHAKESPEARE
Allowed!

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.

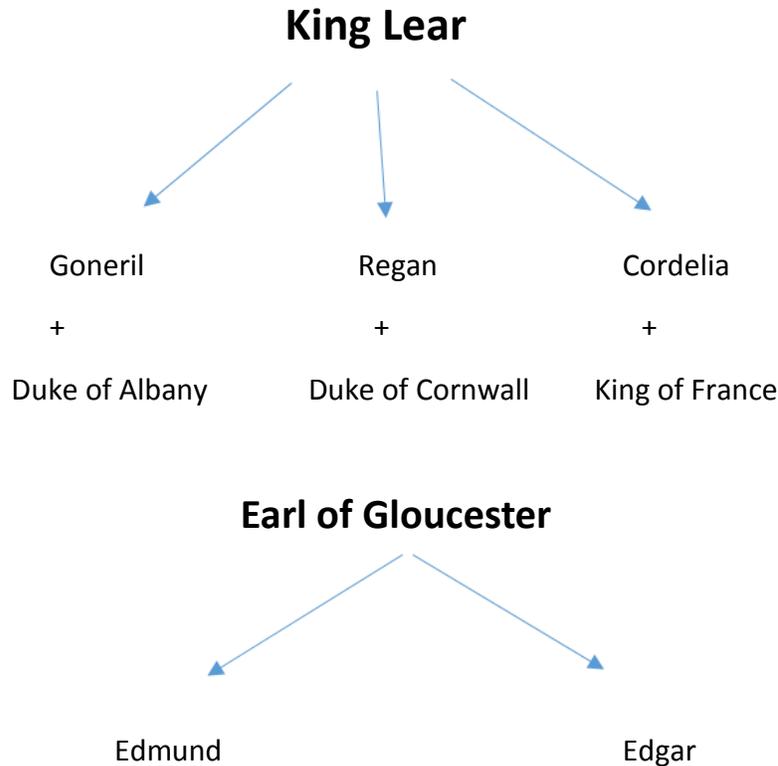
Staged readings model:

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 (@ 100 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.

KING LEAR: THE FAMILY CONTEXT

LEAR: WHICH OF YOU SHALL WE SAY DOTH LOVE US MOST? (I.I.51)

Character diagram



In Shakespeare's time, it was believed that families should replicate the order of society: kings (and fathers) at the head, children obedient to them. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare creates two families through which we can explore the consequences of a breakdown in family order. In the official sermons, or homilies, read in English churches, we find frequent emphasis on order and obedience:

Every degree of people, in their vocacion, calling and office, hath appointed to them their duetie and ordre. Some are in high degree, some in lowe, some kynges and princes, some inferiors and subjects, priests and laimen, masters and servauntes, fathers and chyltren, husandes and wives, riche and poore, and every one have nede of [the] other.

--from "An Exhortacion concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates." From *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547)*. Ed. Ronald B. Bond. Toronto: UP, 1987. P. 161.

Class Activity: Compare the attitudes of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, and Edgar and Cordelia to their parents—and their parents to them. What do the parallels between the Lear family and the Gloucester family help us understand about family dynamics?

Old Age: how do we understand this stage of life?

Shakespeare pictured old age vividly in this famous speech from *As You Like It*: “All the world’s a stage” (The “Seven Ages of Man” speech, Act 2, scene 7)

The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big many voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Scholar Christopher Martin reports that population studies help us understand that “[b]etween the years 1541 and 1606, census numbers gauge the population over age sixty as ranging from 7.21 to 8.67 percent” (4). While many treatises imaged old age as a “second childishness,” that was not the only possibility: “In *King Lear*, the younger generation’s drive to assume power over their elders’ activities finds expression in an avid willingness to project their own image of senescence onto the aged subjects and to exhibit them accordingly, whether to punitive or redemptive ends. While *Lear*’s elder daughters match a “counternarrative” of decline to their father’s self-image” (156-57), *Lear* continues to exhibit physical and emotional strength.

--Christopher Martin. *Constituting Old Age in Early Modern English Literature from Queen Elizabeth to King Lear*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2012.

[Link to Images of *King Lear* from major stage and film productions](#)

Class Activity: Oral history project

King Lear presents an opportunity for students to contemplate the process of aging and the status of the aged in contemporary society. What are attitudes towards senior citizens depicted in the media? What issues are students aware of that affect the elderly population? How and where do students encounter or interact with the aged or elderly in their daily lives? What do students perceive as their responsibilities to the older generation?

One project to connect students with particular elders in their lives and to expand awareness of the challenges facing the elderly is an oral history. Students interview an elder who plays a significant role in their lives—a grandparent, aunt or uncle; a neighbor or family friend; a teacher, religious leader, or other community contact. Students can construct their own questions. They can also draw ideas from *King Lear*; Lear struggles with many challenges of old age:

With family and close friend relationships

With deciding where to live (with children? On his own?)

With figuring out what money and comforts are necessary to live on

With his own health

With meaning and purpose in life

Students may present the results of their interviews in class reports, essays, personal family memoirs that include photographs and commentary, and comparative analyses of their findings and *King Lear*.

These topics for an oral history can also be used to explore the social status of the elderly, the concepts of aging in other cultures (the concept of “filial piety” in Asian cultures makes a thought-provoking contrast), and the question of responsibility for meeting health, housing, income, and spiritual needs of the elderly.

KING LEAR: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

KENT (AS CAIUS): YOU HAVE THAT IN YOUR COUNTENANCE WHICH I WOULD FAIN CALL MASTER.

LEAR: WHAT'S THAT?

KENT: AUTHORITY (1.4.27-30)

A Society of Rank and Position:

King Lear reflects a society conscious of social order and status. Shakespeare's audience understood society to be organized by "rank" or "degree." Birth, inherited or conferred title, land ownership, and wealth determined a person's rank or status. Most commentators of the time followed William Harrison in his *Description of England* (1587) and identified four ranks: nobility and gentlemen (everyone from King or Queen through earls, dukes, esquires, and gentlemen); citizens (city-dwellers, usually with occupations or professional roles); yeomen (farmers in the countryside, generally land-owners); day-laborers and servants. Political and most social power was invested in the nobility; day-laborers and servants had "neither voice nor authority in the common wealthe" (118), according to Harrison.

--William Harrison. *The Description of England: The Classic Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life*. Ed. Georges Edelen. Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library and New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

King Lear opens as a well-ordered society; his daughters are being married to men of appropriate title and status. Lear's loyal nobles include the Earl of Gloucester and the Duke of Kent. Note the characters who assume disguises that put them in different ranks. Also, note the heroic action of a servant in 3.7.

Class Activity: Social class project:

Students may want to compare the accepted social ordering of King Lear and traditional societies with the social order found in democracies. Is the concept of "rank" or "status" still active today? What determines rank or social status?

Students can also explore the characters who are on the bottom of the social scale in the play: The Earl of Kent, who disguises himself to become Lear's servant, Caius; Edgar, who disguises himself to become "Poor Tom"; Curan, a servant of the Earl of Gloucester, who attacks Cornwall in 3.7. Do any of these characters act in surprising ways for those who have no social or political power?

Homelessness and Poverty:

When Lear determines that he cannot endure being humiliated by his daughters, Goneril and Regan, he abandons the castle for the countryside in a raging storm. During this time he experiences homelessness and poverty, and he encounters “Poor Tom” (Edgar in disguise), a beggar representative of the many that roamed the English countryside in the 1600s.

Just before meeting “Poor Tom,” Lear recognizes that he has “taken too little care of” the poor:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.

Lear then encounters Tom directly, and he is no longer speaking about the poor and homeless as an abstract population, but directly to a suffering individual. As William C. Carroll points out, “the king’s descent to the level of the beggar, is not only a critical moment in the play, but a skeptical one—part of an important Shakespearean interrogation of the discourses of poverty and power. Lear’s remarkable prayer is part of a powerful dramatic process that will expose the arbitrariness of class, power, wealth, and so identity” (184-85).

Class discussion question: How does this personal encounter affect Lear? What does it force him to think about?

England saw poverty rates rise in the 1590s through the early 1600s as the result of bad harvests and economic downturns. Thus, most of Shakespeare’s audience members would have seen figures similar to Poor Tom, just as most of us living in urban areas today have seen homeless individuals.

For most of Shakespeare’s audience, Tom O’Bedlam would not be a figure of pity, but one to flee; not just a Dickensian figure reduced in circumstances by an unjust social order, but also something of a charlatan. That Tom *becomes* pitiable and a figure eliciting our sympathy is more the result of our seeing Edgar *within* Tom; on the surface, Tom is a figure of disturbing deformity. . . . If we can overcome the terror of the body that Tom represents, and even care for his welfare, as Lear learns to do, so much greater the triumph.

--William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare*. Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1996. P. 191.

Poor Tom is also a “Bedlam Beggar.” This is a reference to St. Mary of Bethlehem hospital, a London institution founded about 1330, that cared for the mentally insane, particularly the impoverished mentally ill. Its shortened name, “Bedlam,” is the source of the word we use today to mean “chaos” or “confusion.” It was known as a brutal place, with physical punishment and isolation as the main forms of treatment. At this time, madness or mental illness was thought to be a sign of possession by a devil or evil spirits, rather than a treatable psychological condition as we know it today.

Class Activity: Local awareness project

Most communities, even smaller communities, may have populations of homeless or impoverished persons. Students may wish to explore the existence of homelessness in their communities and the policies and agencies that seek to address this issue. Depending upon the students’ ages, school protocols, and student maturity levels, students may be able to learn directly about homeless populations by engaging in community service with a local agency. These experiences can be the basis for comparative essays and personal reflections.

Students may also examine images of the homeless in media—newspapers, television, and internet sites. These images can be compared to the image of “Poor Tom” in *King Lear*.

KING LEAR: THE FOOL AND FOLLY

LEAR: DOST THOU CALL ME FOOL, BOY?

FOOL: ALL THY OTHER TITLES THOU HAST GIVEN AWAY, THAT THOU WAST BORN WITH. (I.4.141-143)

King Lear has a fool—something quite common for monarchs of the early modern era. Queen Elizabeth had a professional court fool, and fools are recorded as part of the household for many monarch across Europe. A fool was often a professional actor—an early version of an improv comedian, who needed to be able to generate humor as the monarch requested.

“Folly” was a concept well understood in early modern Europe. The philosopher Erasmus has a famous book, *In Praise of Folly* (1509), that celebrates the wisdom that results from turning the world upside down or dismantling the presumptions of human superiority. In Erasmus’s view, folly provides a way to gain insight into the true nature of humanity.

Again, take notice of this no contemptible blessing which Nature has given fools, that they are the only plain, honest men and such as speak truth. And what is more commendable

than truth? . . . For whatever a fool has in his heart, he both shows it in his looks and expresses it in his discourse; while the wise men's are those two tongues . . . whereof one speaks truth, the other what they judge most seasonable for the occasion. . . . Yet in the midst of all their prosperity, princes in this respect seem to me most unfortunate, because, having no one to tell them truth, they are forced to receive flatterers for friends (58-59).

--Desiderius Erasmus. *The Praise of Folly* (1509). Trans. by John Wilson (1668).
Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1972.

Lear's fool is one of the play's truth tellers; when we first meet him, he is telling Lear that Lear has made a major mistake in banishing Cordelia and giving all to his elder daughters. The fool continues to make his points through clever jokes, one-liners, and sarcasm.

Class activity:

Students can compile a "Fool's Joke Book" from *King Lear*, using the passages in 1.4, 1.5, and 2.2. They may then compare the Fool's jokes to those of contemporary comedians. Do they find similarities in the kinds of jokes made? Are any contemporary comedians "fools," or truth-tellers, in the way that Lear's fool is? How can humor be a vehicle for communicating truth?

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAY: Language and Setting

EDMUND: FINE WORD, 'LEGITIMATE'! (1.2.18)

The language is always the major barrier in Shakespeare. Despite the fact that Shakespeare is writing what linguists term "early modern English," most readers find his vocabulary and syntax to be "old" and not like modern English at all. Encouraging students to work with passages that are verbally interesting can help break down the language barrier; also, encouraging students to recognize that they don't need to understand every word in order for the play to have meaning—they will recognize meaning in actions, plot, character, and themes. See the suggestions for round table readings and staged readings at the opening of the guidebook.

Verbal patterns: *King Lear* abounds in key words that are repeated from scene to scene. Here are five; students can look up the multiple meanings and then trace the use of these words through the play. How does each word help define a theme of the play?

Nothing

Bond

See/sight/blind

Nature/natural/unnatural

Fool/fool

The online concordance to Shakespeare's plays can be useful to help students find the repetitions of these words: <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/concordance/>

Speeches: *King Lear* is not known for soliloquies as is *Hamlet*; however, the play has a number of powerful speeches. Reading these speeches as a group is a way to help students experience performing the play and gaining confidence with the language.

The actors in the Nashville Shakespeare Festival production use the following list of details to work on speeches. Students can work in groups using this list; they are reproducing what the actors do in rehearsal.

Words—identify key words, juicy words, important words

Vowels and consonants—how does the sound of this word indicate its meaning?

Rhythm—is it regular or irregular?

Regular would be “iambic pentameter”: short beat, long beat:

Old **FOOLS** are **BABES** a**GAIN** and **MUST** be **USED** (1.3.20)

Dear **DAUGHTER** I con**FESS** that I am **OLD** (2.2.343)

Irregular would be any variation on this pattern.

BLOW WINDS and **CRACK** your **CHEEKS! RAGE, BLOW!** (3.2.1)

CURE this **GREAT BREACH** in his a**BUSED** **NATURE** (4.7.15)

First word in line—and last word in line

Double underline verbs

Single underline nouns

Highlight names, titles, and thematic words (see above)

Antithesis or changes—when does the meaning seem to change in the middle of a line or passage?

Speeches to read as a class:

Blow winds (3.2.1-9)

Poor naked wretches (3.4.28-36)

I am a very foolish, fond old man (4.7.60-70)

Settings: Shakespeare's theater may not have been equipped with all the modern technology we find in most theaters today—lighting, sound, moveable stage sets, special effects—yet he asks his audience to imagine remarkable settings: Juliet's balcony in the moonlight in *Romeo and Juliet*, a woods populated with fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a windswept island in *The Tempest*.

King Lear is no exception. This play asks us to imagine a ceremonial castle hall in the opening scene, then travel to another castle with scenes in a courtyard, and in the middle of the play to find ourselves on a heath and then in a hovel in a blinding rainstorm.

Notice carefully how set designer Paul Gatrell's sets reveal the mood and environment of each place—castle, courtyard, heath, hovel. The major challenge is bringing a rainstorm into a theater—and keeping the audience dry!

The shift from castle to heath shows how Lear has lost his status and, perhaps, his sanity. When we arrive at the heath in the rainstorm, we are in what one scholar calls a “boundary situation.”

Richard B. Sewall (1908-2003) is a modern literary scholar who uses concepts from philosophy and theology to explore tragedy in *The Vision of Tragedy* (1959).

The tragic vision impels the man of action to fight against his destiny, kick against the pricks, and state his case before God or his fellows. It impels the artist, in his fictions, toward what [theologian Karl] Jaspers calls “boundary-situations,” man at the limits of his sovereignty—Job on the ash-heap, Prometheus on the crag, Oedipus in his moment of self-discovery, Lear on the heath, Ahab on his lonely quarter-deck. Here, with all the protective covering stripped off, the hero faces as if no man had ever face it before the existential question . . . Lear's “Is man no more than this?”

The Vision of Tragedy. New Haven: Yale UP, 1959. P. 5.

Class application:

The setting for the middle acts of King Lear is a “boundary”: the border between the land and the sea. How does this setting contribute to the action and the themes of these middle scenes? How did the Nashville Shakespeare production create this setting, complete with thunderstorm? How might you try to stage this “boundary situation”?

CONCEPTS OF TRAGEDY:

**ALBANY: SPEAK WHAT WE FEEL, NOT WHAT WE OUGHT TO SAY.
THE OLDEST HATH BORNE MOST: WE THAT ARE YOUNG
SHALL NEVER SEE SO MUCH, NOR LIVE SO LONG.
(5.3.323-25)**

King Lear is regarded as one of Shakespeare's four major tragedies; the others are *Hamlet* (1600), *Othello* (1604), and *Macbeth* (1606). Tragedy as a theatrical form originates in western culture with

the Greek playwrights of 5th century Athens, specifically Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Often, students read tragedies by Sophocles, particularly *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, as part of the high school curriculum. Sophocles' sequel to *Oedipus Rex*, titled *Oedipus at Colonus*, features an aged former King Oedipus reflecting on his life, and thus may be a distant precursor of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The power of Greek tragedy stimulated the first discussions of the definition of tragedy. Also, students may read plays by Arthur Miller, particularly *The Crucible*. Miller's conception of tragedy and comparisons of Shakespeare and Miller can stimulate discussion.

Dr. Larry Brown, Professor of Theater, Lipscomb University, provides an excellent overview of tragedy and discussion of Shakespeare and major theories on his King Lear website:

http://larryavisbrown.homestead.com/files/lear/lear_home.htm

YOU ARE THE CRITIC

Productions of all kinds are regularly reviewed in the mainstream media, on blogs, in speciality 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 of *King Lear*.
- Because not all readers of your review will have seen the play, provide a brief plot overview and the basic details about the production (when, where, what company, names of leading actors, name of director).
- List, with explanations, the three main reasons for your judgment. These should focus on the production itself. Possibilities include casting, acting, set design and costuming, overall concept (see the Director's note), clarity of language and action, interactions among the characters, music and lighting.
- Cite at least three specific moments in the production that support your judgment.
- 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.

SHAKESPEARE'S UPS AND DOWNS

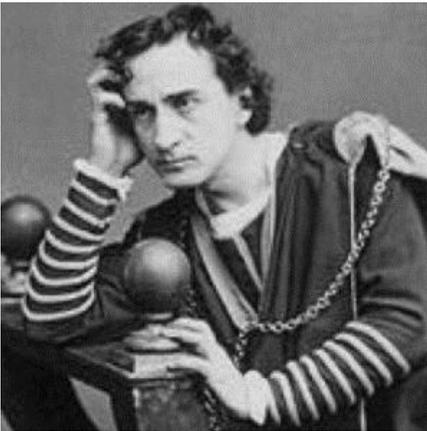
By Dr. Ann Jennalie Cook

Though the most popular and successful playwright of his day, William Shakespeare did not always bask in public acclaim. In fact, the survival of his reputation through the past four centuries was by no means certain. The publication of the First Folio in 1623 saved about half his plays that had never seen the dark of print, but when the Commonwealth closed all theaters from 1642 until 1660, few if any people saw his work on stage.

Even when performances resumed, actors felt free to cut scenes, add or omit characters, and change the plot. The public watched Nahum Tate's *King Lear* come to a happy ending, and Henry Purcell turned *The Tempest* into a musical after John Dryden and William Davenant had both re-written it. Some famous performers could make a version temporarily popular, as David Garrick did with his *Richard III*, but he acted *The Winter's Tale* without three of its five acts. Meanwhile, the growing taste for classical principles among intellectuals led them to deplore the playwright's presumed irregularities of writing style.



David Garrick as Richard III, William Hogarth painting



Edwin Booth circa 1870 as Hamlet

During the 1800s, the theater pillaged Shakespeare to make money. The language was "bowdlerized" to strip out any offensive language, and any works regarded as immoral, like *Measure for Measure*, never made it to the stage. Great actors such as Edmund Kean or Edwin Booth (pictured left) seized on great roles, great moments, and spectacular effects but heavily cut the rest of the plays in which they performed. This kind of Shakespeare traveled so widely in America throughout the nineteenth century that Mark Twain satirized the inept troupes in *Huckleberry Finn*.

Ironically, the Romantics of the period raised Shakespeare's reputation, but not as a playwright. For them, he was a poet to be read rather than seen. Charles Lamb declared *King Lear* "essentially impossible to be represented on a stage." Publishers began to print new editions, many with gorgeous engravings, and found them extremely profitable. Volumes of the plays became an essential part of any cultured family's library. Even in small towns, groups of readers formed to read, discuss, and declaim passages from Shakespeare.

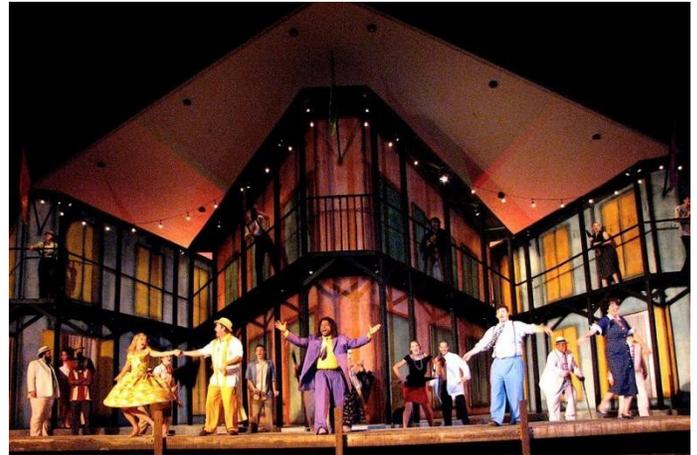


Charles Lamb
(1775-1834)

When literature finally entered the curriculum as a subject worthy of teaching, every student eventually encountered at least a few of the best-known plays. The reverence for Shakespeare the poet ensured his fame while dooming him to dislike and dread among most who had to study him in school. The emergence of complex literary interpretations at the university level

spread to classrooms at the secondary level, further alienating pupils from “the world’s greatest writer.”

It has taken almost a century to return Shakespeare to his roots. In the early 1900s, directors began working from the original texts. Audiences responded enthusiastically to theaters like the Old Vic and the Royal Shakespeare Company in England. On this side of the Atlantic, the Shakespeare Festivals in Ashland, OR, Stratford, ONT, and New York City have grown steadily since the mid-century. Other performing groups devoted primarily to Shakespeare have sprung up throughout the country, including the one here in Nashville. The reconstructed Globe in London and, near-



Nashville Shakespeare Festival

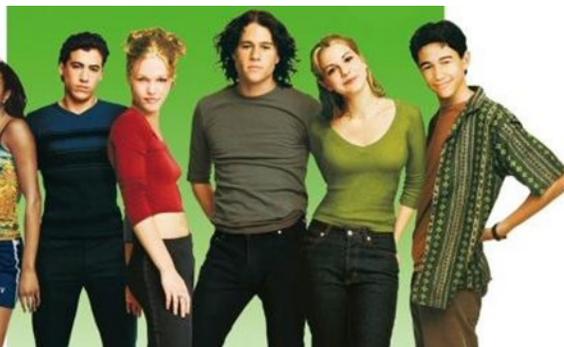
er home, the Blackfriars in Staunton, VA, delight viewers with plays performed on stages from the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. So many other countries have appropriated Shakespeare that scarcely a moment goes by on any day of the year without multiple productions in progress. Indeed, more people now see these works than all the earlier spectators combined.



Emma Thompson and Kenneth Branagh in *Much Ado About Nothing*

With movies and television, Shakespeare has extended his influence to an even wider audience. But even without such mass media, the public would pay homage through the appropriations of his words, characters, and plots by novelists, poets, other playwrights, music, and all forms of popular culture. Any English-speaking individual spouts Shakespeare, knowingly or unknowingly.

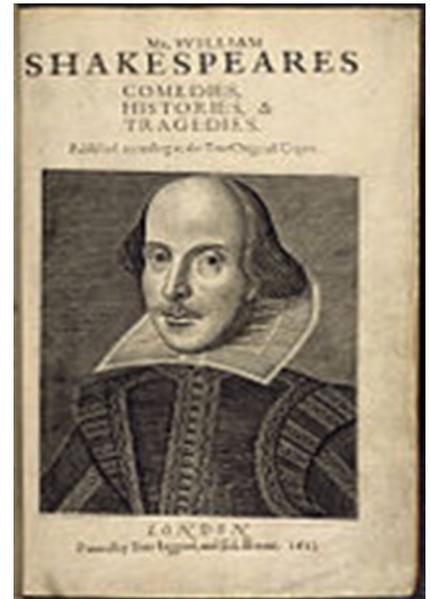
Increasingly, teachers recognize that the plays will speak for themselves if students have access to them in their intended format – performance. Bare words on a page do not represent “Shakespeare” any more than bare notes on a score represent “Beethoven.” A dramatic script is fundamentally different from a poem or novel or short story because it depends on non-verbal elements to bring it to life. It depends on a live, uninterrupted encounter between audience and actors. Anything less demeans his achievement.



10 Things I Hate About You, 1999

THE FIRST FOLIO OF SHAKESPEARE: EXHIBIT AT THE PARTHENON
NOVEMBER 10, 2016, TO JANUARY 2, 2017

Nashville is privileged to host a traveling exhibit of Shakespeare’s First Folio for an extended time in 2016. This exhibit will feature numerous educational and festive activities, especially on Saturdays, and will include presentations about the history and influence of this collected edition of Shakespeare’s works put together in 1623 by two actors in his company. The National Endowment for the Humanities is making this traveling exhibit possible, and the First Folio will be on exhibit at Nashville’s Parthenon in Centennial Park. Watch for information about this special event!



TN ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

[The new State Standards for Reading](#) Literature can be largely covered through following the activities in the Nashville Shakespeare Festival guidebook, as well as reading the play, attending the play, and participating in the NSF workshops. Depending on the activities, teachers may also cover many of the other ELA standards as well. The Guidebook itself can be used for Informational Texts. Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language standards may also be incorporated.

| Standard | Meaning | Activity |
|--|---|--|
| Key Ideas and Details | | |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 | Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. | Language |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2 | Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. | Family Social Context Homelessness Poverty Folly |
| CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3 | Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). | Director’s Note Settings Tragedy |

| Standard | Meaning | Activity |
|--|---|--|
| Craft and Structure | | |
| <u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4</u> | Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.) | Language |
| <u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5</u> | Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. | Director's Note Tragedy |
| <u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6</u> | Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement). | Language Fool and Folly |
| Integration of Knowledge and Ideas | | |
| <u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7</u> | Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.) | <i>King Lear</i> in Production |
| <u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.9</u> | Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. | Not Applicable |
| Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity | | |
| <u>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10</u> | By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently | King Lear (as with most of Shakespeare's plays) meets this standard. |

ADDITIONAL TEACHER RESOURCES:

[Virtual Tour of the Globe](#)

[Shakespearean Dictionary](#)

[Technical Aspects of Theatre Flash Cards](#)

[Theater Lighting & Sound](#)

[Folger Shakespeare Library Teaching Resources](#)

[No Fear Shakespeare: King Lear](#)

[Full Online *King Lear* Text with Commentary](#)

Key texts and books on *King Lear*

Foakes, R. A., ed. *King Lear*, Arden Edition, Third Series, 1997. Arden edition: scholarly, with extensive notes (All quotations in this guidebook are from this text.)

Bate, Jonathan, and Eric Rasmussen, eds. *King Lear*. Royal Shakespeare Company/Modern Library, 2009. Good text with ample discussion of productions and theater history.

The Folger Shakespeare Library now makes its paperback textbooks available in digital editions:

<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Lr&loc=p7>

In addition to those books cited within the guidebook, students and teachers may find the following books useful:

Elton, William R. *King Lear and the Gods*, 1966.

Marcus, Leah. *Puzzling Shakespeare*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988.

Packer, Tina. *Women of Will: Following the Feminine in Shakespeare's Plays*. New York: Knopf, 2015.

Shapiro, James. *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

Welsford, Enid. *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*, 1935.

ABOUT THE NASHVILLE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Mission: The mission of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival is to educate and entertain the Mid-South community through professional Shakespearean 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 stages Shakespeare's plays in the summer at Centennial Park and in January at the Troutt Theater at Belmont University.

The Festival also sponsors numerous workshops, educational outreach programs, and public events. Please consult the website for specific information: <http://nashvilleshakes.org>

NSF Apprentice Company

The Apprentice Company is a training intensive for aspiring theatre lovers age 13+ led by the Artistic Director and Education Director, along with guest artists hired from the professional talent in Nashville. Apprentices receive over 60 hours of performance training in movement, voice and diction, acting, text analysis, and character work, and then perform supporting roles in the Shakespeare in the Park production. Auditions for the 2016 Apprentice Company will be announced in January. For further information on this program, visit:

<http://www.nashvilleshakes.org/apprentice.htm>



2013 Apprentice Company, A Midsummer Night's Dream

Dr. Marcia McDonald, Professor of English at Belmont University, serves on the Board of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival and is editor of this guidebook. Additional resources from Dr. Larry Brown, Lipscomb University, and Ms. Nettie Kraft.

December 2015

Directions to the theater:

Troutt Theater

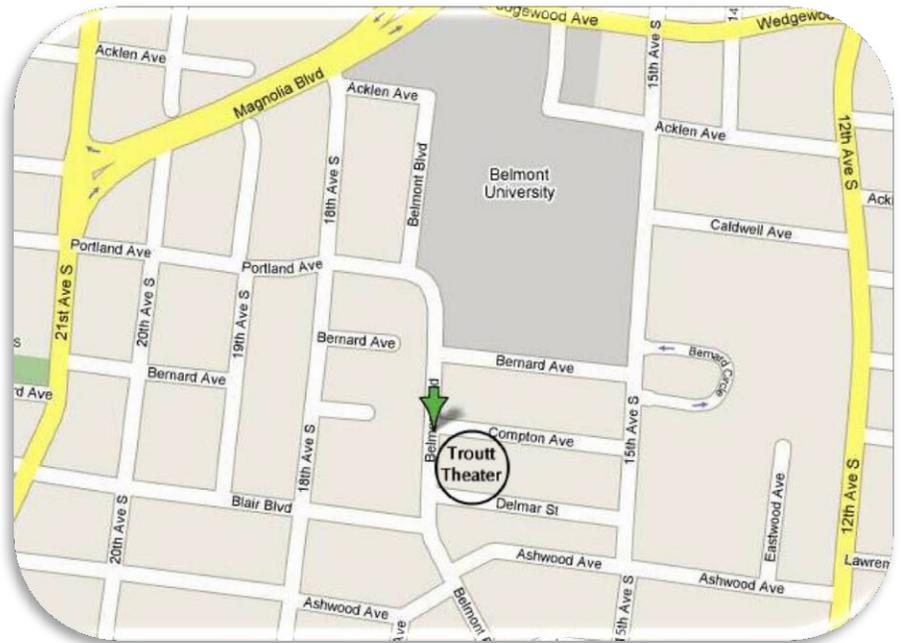
2112 Belmont Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37212

From I-440:

Take Exit 3 for 21st Avenue merge onto 21st Avenue and continue 0.4 mile. Turn RIGHT onto Blair Blvd. and continue 0.4 mile. Turn LEFT onto Belmont Blvd. and continue 500ft.

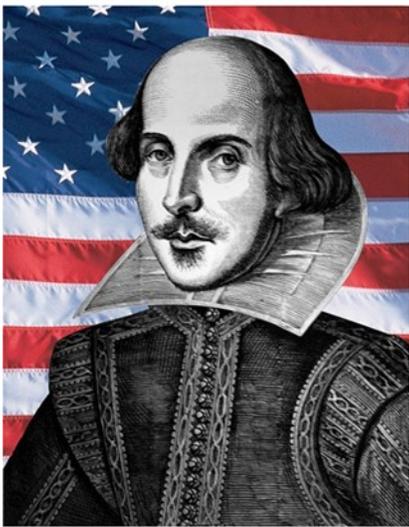
From I-65:

Take Exit 81 for Wedgewood Ave. Go west on Wedgewood Ave. and continue 1 mile. Turn LEFT on 15th Ave. S and continue 0.4 mile. Turn RIGHT on Delmar Street and continue 0.2 mile. Turn RIGHT on Belmont Blvd. and continue 300ft.



King Lear is made possible by:

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
PRESENTS



SHAKESPEARE
IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



This production is part of Shakespeare for a New Generation, a national program of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with Arts Midwest. This project is funded in part by the Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission, and under an agreement with the Tennessee Arts Commission.