

Unique Production Highlights Relationship between *Macbeth's* Main Characters

By Melissa Huggins

American Shakespeare Center (ASC) hosted a stripped down production of *Macbeth* featuring internationally renowned actor, director, and instructor Rob Clare — currently working as a guest director at ASC — and Reiko Aylesworth that placed a laser focus on the relationship between the Scottish thane and his wife, creating a strong and nuanced theatrical experience.

“There can be a deep, deep bond between them, so that, in fact, it is a dark and painful love story that goes terribly wrong,” Clare said about the Macbeths’ relationship. “By stripping away the other major characters, we focused right in on this central relationship and could enhance the audience’s focus accordingly.”

Aylesworth, primarily a television actor, played Lady Macbeth in the 70-minute performance in which the other major characters were omitted. Accompanied by two onstage readers and three Witches who watched the onstage action from the balcony, Clare’s Macbeth was forthright and energetic and Aylesworth’s Lady Macbeth brought subtlety and nuance to a role often played without the vulnerability she conveyed. Perhaps it was their real-life wedding only two weeks before their first performance at the Blackfriars that infused Clare and Aylesworth’s scenes with the deep bond they sought to bring to the forefront.

Limited rehearsal time meant that bringing this version of *Macbeth* to stage was an interesting, if not entirely new, process for the couple. Clare and Aylesworth



PHOTO BY NORM SHAEFER

Reiko Aylesworth (l) as Lady Macbeth and Rob Clare as Macbeth in their performance of *Macbeth* at the Blackfriars Playhouse.

produced their version of *Macbeth* in Illinois two years ago, but they wanted to develop it further for the Blackfriars. They enlisted the help of friend Kim Martin-Cotten, an actor/director whose help during an intensive week of rehearsal provided crucial feedback

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For the Director

BY DR. PAUL MENZER

PHOTO BY WOODS PIERCE

This issue of the *Folio* was meant to be exclusively dedicated to the success of the inaugural year of our revamped MFA. But this column must be exclusively dedicated to the memory of MBC Professor Emeritus of English Frank Southerington, who passed peacefully at home on August 15, 2013, just after his 75th birthday. These twin dedications are not in conflict, however, since it was Frank’s devotion to the growth of the Shakespeare and Performance program that allows us to evolve, allows us to adapt, and allows us to aspire always to close the distance between our reach and our grasp.

I cannot claim to know Frank well, since it was only at his retirement that I came to Mary Baldwin College. But it always struck me that, beneath the twinkle, Frank had a steely courage. It was an act of courage for Frank, nearing the end of his distinguished academic career, to take on a new role as the inaugural director of a new academic program. And, after all, it was Frank and his co-founder Ralph Cohen who had the courage to imagine a program as unique as the MLitt/MFA in Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature in Performance. And it was Frank who embraced the challenge of converting the imagined into the actual. It was Frank who built the first class to matriculate into the program, a group of students who — like our recently graduated Rovers — had the courage to trust the vision of this program’s faculty as they stepped into the unknown. It was Frank who shepherded those students through the early years of the program’s life, attending patiently to them with tea and sympathy. And it was Frank, finally, who built

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‘My lord, they say that all the Protestants are massacred’

Directing Christopher Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris*

By Sarah Martin

How does a director find a way to create a coherent, relevant, and — most importantly — entertaining production of an early modern play with a corrupted text and a nearly nonexistent stage history for a community of the foremost Marlowe scholars in the world? Such was the challenge facing MLitt/MFA instructor and American Shakespeare Center veteran Jeremy West when he began work as director of Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* for the Seventh International Marlowe Conference.

West’s production was a one-off performance for an extremely select and informed crowd and, perhaps, the only full production of *Massacre* that the conference attendees had ever seen. Rather than finding the task daunting, West seized the opportunity to explore what many scholars deem a poor text that cannot be performed. He demonstrated that, with a dedicated cast and a lot of hard work, a performance of *The Massacre at Paris* can impress even the toughest crowds.

Knowing that the cast would perform for an audience of Marlowe experts, I asked West if his directorial approach was different from that of his other productions.

“I try never to underestimate the audience,” he said. “You never know when you have an armchair scholar out there who can go toe-to-toe with any PhD. I did, however, feel the pressure to not make any oversights in the staging with respect to stage directions — embedded and otherwise — because of the atmosphere in which we were performing.”

West also faced ubiquitous production challenges such as limited actor availability and an abbreviated rehearsal period. Rather than spending a large amount of time on table work in the rehearsal room, he relied on the cast to explore the text on their own and they did not disappoint.

“I had to move right into staging the scenes and talking with individual actors about scenes and speeches outside of group rehearsals,” he said. “A great deal of trust was put into the actors to do their ‘homework,’ and I only approached a text issue in rehearsal that was unclear or muddled.”



PHOTO BY KAYLA PETERSON

Katie Crandol (front) and Nicola Collett rehearse a dramatic scene in Christopher Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* at King Theatre, Stuart Hall School.

West’s expertise as a fight choreographer was essential to many moments of stage violence in the massacre scenes that comprise the first half of the play. Once again, he played to the actors’ strengths.

“With varying levels of combat experience we had to keep the fights simple yet bring about the brutality of a massacre. I believe we made a weakness into a strength by focusing in on small combat moments that made it more personal for the audience,” he said.

It was this connection with the audience that allowed West and the actors to demonstrate the benefits of exploring a text — especially a controversial and problematic text — through the medium of performance. As West put it, performing an un-performable text “offers an element of adventure.” Not to mention a great night out at the theatre.





Dane C.T. Leasure (l) as Suffolk and Charlene V. Smith as Margaret of Anjou in the MLitt production of *Margaret: A Tyger's Heart*.

PHOTO BY KAYLA PETERSON

Performance as Research: Marrying Two Disciplines with *Margaret: A Tyger's Heart*

By Melissa Huggins

When choosing a subject for her thesis project, Charlene V. Smith was fairly certain it was going to be the character of Margaret of Anjou.

"I've been interested in Margaret for several years, having seen many iterations of the *Henry VI* plays, including full productions at the American Shakespeare Center (ASC) as well as full productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2008."

During her research into productions and adaptations of the three *Henry VI* plays, Smith uncovered a trend among contemporary playwrights to adapt the Shakespeare trilogy to focus on Margaret. However, research via articles, books, and interviews can only take a project so far, so Smith decided to play the role of Margaret herself in Michael Sexton's recent adaptation, *Margaret: A Tyger's Heart*.

"I felt like the challenge of researching Margaret in *Henry VI* production history as well as the challenge of performing that complicated and exhausting role successfully married the tenets of scholarship and performance," Smith said.

Tyger's Heart conflates the *Henry VI* plays and parts of *Richard III* into one performance that tells the story of the War of the Roses from Margaret's (often biased) perspec-

tive. A mix of dream, memory, and reality, Smith's production — directed by fellow Shakespeare and Performance student Kelly Elliott — took Sexton's adaptation and, as Smith says, "played it to the full," creating a strong, complex, and moving piece of theater.

Elliott played with gender when casting the show. In Sexton's workshop of *Tyger's Heart*, he specifically cast all men and one woman; in contrast, Elliott chose to cast mostly women and two men. Her choices enabled visual parallels between Margaret (Smith) and Richard III (Celi Oliveto), since female actors portrayed both characters. Also, Elliott's casting displayed an integration of first- and second-year MLitt students, undergraduates from MBC, and members of the Staunton community, which is vital to the S&P program. ASC actor Ben Curns was brought in to choreograph fights, and the resulting production was innovative and collaborative, drawing upon all the strengths of S&P.

Tyger's Heart sparked much discussion during the talkback sessions held after each performance. Facilitated by dramaturgs Jessica Schiermiester and Melissa Johnson, the talkbacks connected the performance to research, and Smith asked the audience questions and noted the responses.

"The end goal for this production was audience response and actor response," Elliott said.

Tyger's Heart was an opportunity for S&P students to stretch and work with broader communities at both Mary Baldwin and the ASC. It was a strong production that pushed the boundaries of performance and research to define what the S&P program strives to achieve.

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about how the piece was taking shape.

More alterations came when surveying the Playhouse space; Clare took advantage of the balcony and placed the Witches in it to oversee the action of the play. In the previous Illinois performances of the piece, Aylesworth had taken on the role of one of the Witches as well as Lady Macbeth, but for this version the decision to clearly separate Lady Macbeth from the Witches was a choice that strengthened the overall focus of the production.

The intensive weekend rehearsal before opening night honed in on creating a complex soundscape using the skill of actors cast as Witches (it was discovered that one played the fiddle) and additional readers, as well as instruments such as Hawaiian thunder boxes, drums, and a singing bowl for Banquo's ghost. Both performances of the show were polished with startling moments of intensity — such as the banquet scene — and deep sadness at the play's close with the death of Lady Macbeth.

On a more personal note, *Macbeth* provided Clare and Aylesworth the chance to work together and challenge themselves as stage actors, and for them it was, "very much a shared piece." Aylesworth has worked primarily in television, but veteran Shakespearean performer Clare said that when they first met he immediately recognized her as "an actress of real instinct and power who should be doing Shakespearean roles."

"We want to keep exploring [*Macbeth*] and going deeper," Clare said. "It's wonderful to have the opportunity to do so here in Staunton, where there is not only a wonderful and supportive space, but also an informed and experienced Shakespeare-watching audience ... against whose reactions we can measure what we're doing."



Shakespeare and Performance (S&P) Master of Fine Arts program. Members of the Class of 2013 formed the program's first company, named Roving Shakespeare, and embarked on a season of five shows. Company members and faculty alike embraced the intense and often daunting process, learning expected and unexpected lessons during the pilot year. Several company members — now recent graduates putting their training to work — and S&P faculty members share their insights, anecdotes, and achievements here.

THE COMPANY

Q: What does it mean to be part of a company?

Jamie Weaver [JW]: Love and sacrifice.

A.J. Sclafani [AS]: I think part of being part of a company is learning to get along with everyone. You don't have to love everyone, but you have to be able to get along with them and work with them in a professional environment.

Michael Wagoner [MW]: It is sort of like family in the end, especially because we didn't create this company. [In the same way that] you can't choose your family, you can't choose your MFA company. You are with whomever you are with and it's about learning to give, to sacrifice — if need be — and to eventually love it for all the quirks. It's a lot about give and take.

Monica Cross [MC]: And learning where you all fit with one another. Everyone has strengths, everyone has weaknesses, and it's really about figuring out how best to arrange your strengths and weaknesses to create the best work that you can.

Q: What are the benefits of not being able to choose your company members?

JW: Learning new things.

MW: Yes, right. Learning about new people, you are forced to therefore work with people you would not choose and get to see them shine in places that you might not have originally imagined them.

James Byers [JB]: I think that causes you to emerge in different ways than you expected ... because when you choose people that you know and who know you really well, you tend to be put into a type that they know you can play because they've seen you play that type. With this group of people, even though we have known each other for going on three years now, they haven't seen us do everything, so they might expect other things or maybe want to see if you can do other things. So you really can get stretched in different ways.

Stephanie Tschetter [ST]: I also think the value system is different with other people, so people care about different things in the

company than I would care about and I think that makes outcomes better. I wouldn't think, 'Oh this costume is really important for this concept and here is how this works in,' because my mind doesn't really work that way, but because [Monica's] value system is placed there ... the show becomes that much better.

Q: Moving into the touring aspect and since touring was a big part of what you did this year, what was one of the strangest, funniest, most challenging experiences from being on tour?

MW: The school announcement at one elementary school, when we suddenly discovered that we were not performing just for second graders and up, but we were also having a performance for Pre-K through first grade. [Laughter] I ran backstage and I said, 'I'm so sorry, do the best you can, adjust to your audience, play out what you can, push through. We have an older audience coming right after this.'

Elizabeth Rentfro [ER]: I loved the Pre-K show [*Comedy of Errors*], because they loved every moment of it. What was great about that was ... they ended up being such a great little audience; actually a very large audience full of little people. So the turnaround of the chaos for us to having a great audience was amazing.

Q: You opened up Q&As with students. Any crazy or interesting questions?

MW: "Is the courtesan married to the Duke?"

Deb Streusand [DS]: "Is the Goldsmith married?"

Brian Maxwell [BM]: "How do you get the curtains to stay up?"



PHOTO BY LINDSEY WALTERS



PHOTO BY KAYLA PETERSON

Q: What were your expectations going into the MFA? Did the process fulfill those expectations?

Angelina LaBarre [AL]: I did not have a good feeling when we came back in August, and I have to say although there has been a lot of pain — physical and emotional — it's been worth it. I clearly surpassed my expectations for myself because I'm coming out of this positively.

Q: What has the MFA prepared you for?

JB: I really feel capable of company-building. Just the stresses that we've gone through, the different means of building shows, learning how to market, and seeing directors learning how to work with us has really taught me a lot about company building, which I think is one of the instrumental things about this company.

ER: I think another thing that is really important is you need to know what you want in the theater world, what you want for yourself, where you want to be, and what you want to do. Because you are forced to do everything, [this program] forces you to realize what you like what you don't like, what kind of theater you want to do, what kind of theater you don't want to do, what kind of people you want to work with — very, very basic things about living your life as a professional theater practitioner.

MC: And coming out of that idea of being forced to do everything, you come out of

[this company] prepared to do whatever it is you want to do in a different way. Whatever your focus is because you've had to help build a costume, or help put together a set, and you've acted in this show, you begin not just thinking about your segment of the theatrical process, but how your segment influences and is influenced by the theatrical process.

Q: Why Shakespeare?

AS: I have my main background in musical theater and I wanted to get an education in the "classics" to make myself a more well-rounded performer as opposed to being specialized.

AL: Shakespeare is universal; you can connect it to anything. Anything. And I think that speaks to what they're trying to get at with this MFA company model.

MW: Job security, because in English academic departments the only guy that's taught as dramatic literature is Shakespeare.

DS: There is always something new to challenge yourself within Shakespeare, you can never say "I get Shakespeare now, I'm done with Shakespeare." You always have a new level to rise to, whether you are a scholar or an actor or director.

ER: You could do *Romeo and Juliet* 80 times and do it 80 different ways.

THE FACULTY

Q: Why study Shakespeare via an early modern English playing company model?

Paul Menzer: One of the reasons we decided that the company model was the right way to study Shakespeare is that it had some historical allegiances to the way that early modern theater companies worked. We thought formulating the MFA experience this way would find a closer match between what we study and how we study it.

Ralph Cohen: One of the reasons for the company model is the market and preparing students to do a great job in a market that changes all the time. Being polymaths when it comes to, at least, the question of early modern theater, seems to be a really useful thing. Having students in the work itself,

doing the work itself, not just reading lots of things, but doing lots of things, seems like good professional training.

Matt Davies: I have long felt a great concern as a professional actor that the only training that we were forced into as actors — and when I say we I mean at least the English speaking world — is essentially a Darwinian model of acting. The "I" comes first, survival of the fittest, "What do I want?" I felt as an actor it was more useful to start asking, "What do we want, what do we need?" Then there was kind of a notion that the "we" world suited more radical and more modern concepts of theater and I have no reason to believe that it didn't actually completely suit an early modern form of theater as well.

Doreen Bechtol: The company model is truly a clever pathway for thinking about how to make work, and this idea of "we," yes ... but it's the "we" of every day. From early in the morning until late into the evening the company makes decisions and creates its work, not in isolation. I think this model is obviously integral to making theater, but it's also a universal model for any career path. You have to be able to share resources, to speak to other people, to speak to your peers. You have to be responsible to the whole. I think that the company model really speaks to that idea of collaboration and ensemble and having to make decisions with 12 or 13 other people every single day. Our students are learning how to be in the world.

Terry Southerington: One of the big advantages to the "we" concept is that, even as you get back to the "I" concept ... the more you learn about every other aspect of the theater, the better you will be in your particular area.

Janna Segal: There are some areas of theater practice that require the ability to speak every single vocabulary. Dramaturgy is one and directing is one, so even when a person becomes very specialized, she is still required to speak the vocabulary of all fields. Our company model is excellent training for cross-discipline communication.

New Company Model, New Roles

Over the course of their final year in the Master of Fine Arts program, members of Roving Shakespeare took on many different production roles within the company. From marketing, to costuming, to stage managing, the Rovers did it all. A few of them shared their experiences while describing the primary role they played within the company. PHOTOS BY LINDSEY WALTERS (except where noted)

MARKETING

By James Byers

The thing about marketing the newly minted MFA company model was we did not really know where we were going until we got there. Like many aspects of our experience, Roving Shakespeare made many choices as it went along (with faculty help, of course). Theatrical companies often market themselves along a specific approach to gain audience. These approaches center on singular themes such as prestige, celebrity, innovation, tradition, or one of many other keywords that will spark the interest of consumers. Roving Shakespeare's thematic approach had to find common ground with the interest levels of its audience, but without a past approach to draw from.

We learned to highlight how we differed from other theatre companies, thereby marketing our specific experience. The Shakespeare and Performance model, as foreseen by the program, was a departure from the format of other American performance MFA programs, even those that employ a similar company format. We focused on how the program blends the professional and the educational, as well as the

programmatic emphasis on theatre generalists — what I like to call creating “theatrical Swiss Army knife practitioners.” Posters, social media, and articles in Staunton's *News Leader* were the typical vehicles of our marketing efforts.

Like the many lessons we learned in building a company, building a marketing strategy lay in finding new definitions for our experience. We hope that the foundation we began in defining ourselves (and this new model) will help subsequent companies find even greater support and audience.

COSTUMING

By Monica Cross

Roving Shakespeare had a colorful season in terms of costume design. A.J. Sclafani designed *The Comedy of Errors*; Brian Maxwell designed *The Tempest*; and I designed *The Sea Voyage*, by Fletcher and Massinger, and *As You Like It*. *King Lear*, our Renaissance-style show, was the only production in our season that did not have a company member specifically in charge of costume design.

The Comedy of Errors started the

season with a 1960s modern-art-inspired design, based on the works of Jackson Pollock and Piet Mondrian. Characters of Ephesus wore primary colors with color-blocked designs. The two sets of twins wore garments splattered with paint and chaotic brushstrokes. Egeon and Emilia wore black and white, showing that the color had gone out of their world with the loss of their sons. The vibrant costumes popped against the backdrop of black flats that traveled with the company.

With *The Tempest*, Roving Shakespeare took on the challenge of performing a Shakespearean play with only five actors. This show continued the theme of bright colors. Each actor wore a different color working their way around the color wheel: Antonio/Trinculo wore red, Alonso/Sebastian wore purple, Ferdinand/Ariel/Caliban wore blue, Miranda/Gonzalo/Stephano and Prospero wore green. Vests gave the costumes a tailored look while yoga pants allowed the actors flexibility on stage.

The Sea Voyage, in the same five-actor style as *The Tempest*, had the added challenge of being a quirky but relatively unknown early modern play. With large group scenes and convoluted plots, the costume design became a sort of matching game to the audience. The playful design gave actors one costume for each character, which actors wore over a rugged pirate costume.

The final show, *As You Like It*, focused on the artifice and structure of court life in contrast to the natural and earthy freedom of the forest. Drab blues and multi-layered suits and corsets characterized the court costumes. The forest scenes, in contrast, filled the stage with vivid greens and browns. As more court characters sojourned to the forest, they abandoned their confining court attire for the simpler, more freeing garments of the country.

The ingenuity of these designs is not only in what appeared on stage, but also in the behind-the-scenes work done by costumers. In each show, the costume designer was also acting and filling other roles in the company. They also designed with a limited budget in mind. Since the program has focused mostly on the language and perfor-



The Comedy of Errors

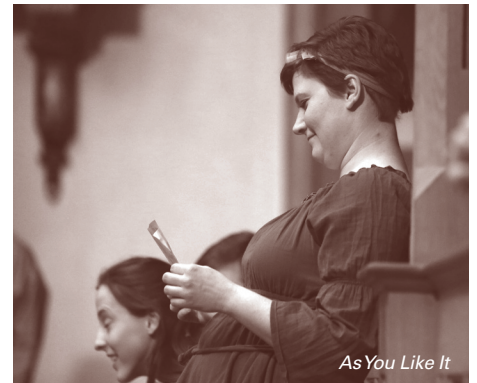


The Sea Voyage



The Tempest

PHOTO BY KAYLA PETERSON



As You Like It

mance of Shakespeare's plays, design is still an emerging part of the curriculum. Roving Shakespeare's costume designers paved the way for further development by future MFA companies.

STAGE MANAGING

By Brian Maxwell

During my time with Roving Shakespeare, I can best describe the role of the production stage manager as that of a parent. Not to imply that I have some great life experience jump on my fellow company members, far from it, but that the needs of this job dictate that parental role. Working as the stage manager for two of Roving Shakespeare's shows, *Comedy of Errors* and *As You Like It*, in addition to working as a production stage manager for the season overall required that I adopt 12 people into my family ... and quickly.

A stage manager must be the authoritarian in the room, enforcing the company rules, as well as the production caregiver, being able to hear and help any company member with any problem. The delicate balance of these two distinct areas leaves me with a greater appreciation for family. Learning how to tell a person they owe

the company 25 push-ups for being five minutes late to a morning warm-up session, then following up with that person to make sure that everything is okay with them is the fine line that I walked every day. While touring, the stage manager's job is to be sure that every prop, costume, and set piece is accounted for, and making sure that all our "toys" are picked up and put away. However, the stage manager must also be aware of the physical and mental state of each member of the company when assigning tasks based on who is able to do a job on any given day.

While the stage manager is the eye of the storm for any given production, the production stage manager is the National Weather Service and FEMA. The production stage manager must anticipate how schedule changes, visiting scholars/artists, new academic assignments, a production's need for more rehearsal time, and much more will affect the company and determine the most stress-free manner of dealing with any situation. He or she must control the rehearsal space as well as be in the loop with the overall company timeline. Finding the way to be sure the process is completed is the ultimate goal of any production stage manager. He has to see beyond the storm to keep the company focused on finishing the

next task in order to reach its aspirations. The best way a production stage manager can aid a company is by keeping three simple words/goals in mind: love, respect, and professionalism. Focus on those things and your time will not be wasted.

MUSIC

By Elizabeth Rentfro

There is no doubt that Shakespeare loved music. The word alone appears 221 times in his works. Nearly every play has an instance of music or a character that praises its virtues. This season Roving Shakespeare chose to do two of the most musical Shakespearean plays: *The Tempest* and *As You Like It*.

During the month of August, we discovered that Roving Shakespeare had incredible and diverse musical talent. James Byers, Deb Streusand, and I penned melodies for songs from *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, and *As You Like It*, respectively. From there, the group created full orchestrations of those tunes with the help of American Shakespeare Center's Chris Johnston. More than our clear talent for music as an ensemble, it became obvious that we shared a love for it that would integrate itself into

all of our productions.

In addition to the plays that incorporated music, we chose to perform preshow and/or interlude music in every production. To incorporate music into these plays, we needed someone on each show directing its progress. While I was given the title of music director for more than half of the productions (*Comedy*, *Tempest*, and *The Sea Voyage*), I never really felt as though it was a proper label. I would alternatively call myself the music facilitator. In true ensemble style, I leaned heavily upon my fellow Rovers to fill in the gaps where I was lacking. The result was incredibly ambitious and exciting music. In addition to Johnston, the company drew on assistance from skilled American Shakespeare Center musicians Ben Curns on *Sea Voyage* and Greg Phelps on *Comedy of Errors* and *As You Like It*. We learned from them not only technical skills, but also how to run an effective, collaborative, and honestly fun music rehearsal.

The stresses of this program and the new MFA model are many. Like any other time-consuming and difficult endeavor, on occasion you find yourself exhausted and dismayed. I can speak only for myself, but I think my fellow Rovers would agree that Shakespeare was right when he wrote “if music be the food of love, play on”. Often playing our songs helped refocus our goals and gave us new respect for one another and the work we were doing together. So, Rovers, play on.

DRAMATURG

By Stephanie Tschetter

I was dramaturg for two shows during Roving Shakespeare’s season: *The Comedy of Errors* and *King Lear*. Dramaturging these two shows presented two very different sets of challenges.

The Comedy of Errors was our education show. To fulfill its education purposes, the show needed to be younger audience friendly and to be relatively short — 45 minutes to be exact, so that the show could fit into one class period. Director Michael Wagoner initially cut the script to 75 minutes, then he sent it to me in hopes I could trim it even more. The biggest concern was keeping the verse and as much of the plot as possible intact. It was tough, because in a program like S&P where we presumably love the language of Shakespeare, I sometimes had to cut beautiful lines. I frequently

felt like I was being ruthless.

Alternatively, *King Lear*, our Renaissance-style show, presented challenges that most dramaturgs never have to worry about. Along with more “typical” dramaturgical duties, stage manager Angelina LaBarre and I—in the absence of a director—cast the show, something I was not expecting when I originally volunteered for the position. Other duties I had were to help come up with the concept for the poster design, to take down blocking when Angelina was onstage; and to let actors know when they were not acting in thrust. The entire two weeks of rehearsal were exhausting, but they taught me many useful theatrical duties entirely unrelated to the dramaturgical. I think these tasks were what the faculty envisioned when they started the company model. I learned not only how to dramaturg a Shakespearean show, but how to do so much more.

DIRECTING

By Michael Wagoner

As the first student director in the new MFA company model, I had a significant task set before me. How do I effectively lead the production, while also remaining a cooperative peer when not in rehearsal? This question reflects no easy task. This article does not give me the space to consider fully the issues that went into such a balancing act, yet I will try to reflect on one key aspect that aided me through this process and consider how I best saw that implemented in our production.

The most important quality for an MFA company model director to have is collaboration. While this particular word has become synonymous with our work, its over-usage speaks to its importance when working in this model. I collaborated throughout my work on *The Comedy of Errors*: I chose music with the show’s music director, Elizabeth Rentfro, and I used an aesthetic for costumes and sets suggested by A.J. Sclafani, the costume designer. These are only a few of the key ways in which I tried to collaborate on our production. But the work on Commedia dell’Arte that we employed in the show demonstrates that collaboration most fruitfully.

Over the summer, I decided that I wanted to use Commedia as an influence for the style of the show. I thought that the wackiness of Commedia would allow me to engage with a play that I did not particularly like. Through the suggestion

of Company Manager Doreen Bechtol, I brought in Kate Eastwood Norris to lead us in the rudiments of Commedia physicality and character. Through our work with Norris, each company member had a chance to play with different facets of their character for *The Comedy of Errors*. Through Norris’ openness in the workshops, actors began to discover whether their character was a zanni or an Il Capitano or a dottore. During this process, I took a back seat. I performed the exercises with my company members, but I did not impose any preset notions as actors uncovered which Commedia stock character best fit them.

This collaborative work developed into a show that had a cohesiveness that did not rob the actors of any agency. Everyone lived within the same world, and no one had a particular character forced upon them. As we got into rehearsals, some actors felt that their character had changed and that they needed to add aspects from other stock characters. I allowed my actors to make these choices for themselves. Assistant Director Jarom Brown also worked with actors during this time to give them more opportunities to refine their commedia work. Through this approach, I gained trust in the abilities of my actors, which they, in turn, began to give back to me. Through this trust and collaboration, we put on *The Comedy of Errors*, a show that I have come to love.



Rogue SHAKESPEARE

Treason is the Reason for the Season

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THE SEASON

Macbeth
Richard II
The Insatiate Countess
Dr. Faustus
Fuente Ovejuna

THE PLAYERS

Kelly Elliot
Mary Beth Geppert
Melissa Huggins
Rebecca Hodder
Stephanie Howieson
Cyndi Kimmel
Dane C.T. Leasure
Julia Nelson
Celi Oliveto
Jessica Schiermeister
Charlene V. Smith
Riley Steiner

Ready to Take on the New MFA Year

By Stephanie Howieson

After a three-week gestation period in May 2013, MBC's Shakespeare and Performance program is proud to announce the birth of its second child. The proud parents are 12 scholar/practitioners from very different backgrounds collaborating to raise the changeling known as Rogue Shakespeare. As the second company to inhabit the redesigned MFA model, members have big shoes to fill. Last year, Roving Shakespeare blazed a glorious trail that allowed the new company to benefit from hard-earned lessons about what it takes to design, promote, and produce a season of performances inspired by the playing company practices of the early modern period.

True to the group's name, the season includes only two titles by Shakespeare, and all the plays have a distinctly rebellious or roguish slant. First up is a devised show based on themes present throughout the plays. Can you smile and say, "treason?" Next, *Macbeth* will serve as the educational touring show. *Richard II* and *The Insatiate Countess*, the first by Shakespeare and the second by John Marston et. al., will be produced as extreme casting shows with five actors each. The Renaissance-style production collaboratively directed with limited rehearsal time is Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. Capping the season, *Fuente Ovejuna*, a Spanish Golden Age play by Lope de Vega, will be performed at the Blackfriars Playhouse using Shakespeare's staging conditions. The final show is slated to be guest directed by Beth Burns, artistic director of Hidden Room Theatre in Austin. This ambitious season reflects the diverse interests and capacities of the Rogue ensemble.

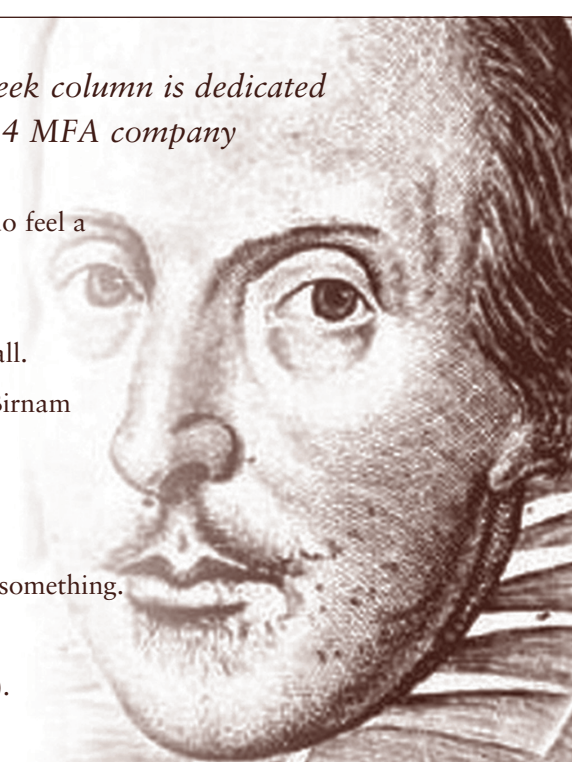
As the Rogues begin their year, it is worth remembering the words of an actor speaking about working with director Peter Brook, "I am a difficult actor and he is not an easy director. It makes a good combination. Easy actors and easy directors make mediocre art. Real art is a battle."

Let the battle begin.

You know you're a Rogue Shakespeare geek when ...

This issue's Geek column is dedicated to our 2013-14 MFA company

- #10 ... you are only a traitor if you lose, otherwise you are the lawful king (you do feel a little guilty about it, but not enough to give up the crown).
- #9 ... your pets are named Graymalkin and Paddock.
- #8 ... you have Mephistopheles on speed dial, but he never answers when you call.
- #7 ... you have no fear of the Ides of March, but you are a little nervous when Birnam Wood suddenly shows up outside of Dunsinane.
- #6 ... the same goes for whenever you meet anyone not of woman born.
- #5 ... you are always on the hunt for a good spot remover.
- #4 ... you automatically say, "Fuente Ovejuna did it," when you are accused of something.
- #3 ... you know it has just gotten real when gages start being thrown down.
- #2 ... you believe the path to true love always involves a good bed trick (or two).
- #1 ... all your crowns are hollow.



ROGUE SHAKESPEARE (MFA STUDENTS)

KELLY ELLIOT traveled to NYC for an internship with New York Classical Theatre. She also stage managed Rob Clare's *Macbeth* at American Shakespeare Center.

MARY BETH GEPPERT spent part of her summer with Chesapeake Shakespeare Company assistant directing its production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, directed by Ralph Cohen and featuring Matt Davies.

STEPHANIE HOWIESON worked this summer with Endstation Theatre Company in Lynchburg.

MELISSA HUGGINS interned this summer in American Shakespeare Center's costume shop with resident designer Erin West.

DANE C.T. LEASURE launched the inaugural season of his theatre company, Rubber City Shakespeare, in Akron, Ohio. The opening production was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He also taught and assistant directed a youth show at Weathervane Playhouse in Akron.

JULIA NELSON worked with Hidden Room Theatre in Austin, Texas, and assisted with a puppet show involving the research of early modern scholar Tiffany Stern.

JESSICA SCHIERMEISTER dramaturged three shows for American Shakespeare Center's Theatre Camp. She also traveled to Michigan to intern as a teaching artist with Pigeon Creek Shakespeare Company, co-founded by S&P alum Katherine Mayberry.

CHARLENE V. SMITH played Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* for Brave Spirits Theatre in Washington DC in June and interned with Oregon Shakespeare Festival in July.

RILEY STEINER was joined by her daughter, Hallie Cooper from Los Angeles, for a summer in Staunton. Riley and Hallie co-directed Ben Jonson's *Volpone* for American Shakespeare Center's Theatre Camp.

MLITT STUDENTS SECOND-YEARS

AMY SIMPSON GRUBBS served as dramaturg for American Shakespeare Center Theatre Camp productions of *Richard II*, *Volpone*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

DAVID LOEHR played Demetrius in *Titus Andronicus* with Citizens of the Universe in Charlotte and worked as a production intern/ understudy on *Troilus and Cressida* with American Shakespeare Center.

SARAH MARTIN served as dramaturg for a production of Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* that was presented at the seventh International Marlowe Conference in June.

FIRST-YEARS

IAN CHARLES earned a BA in English literature and theatre from King University in Bristol, Tennessee, in 2012. Born in Baltimore, Ian grew up in an arts-loving family, and he enjoys balancing music, theatre, and dance pursuits. Mary Baldwin's program, he hopes, will cater to both the performer and academic in him.

KENDRA EMMETT was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, but grew up in Quito, Ecuador. In 2013, she earned a BA in theatre from Indiana Wesleyan University and knows MBC will be the perfect place to foster her combined love of theatre performance and literature.

MARSHALL GARRETT received a BA in theatre arts from Illinois Wesleyan University. Originally from Ohio, Marshall comes to MBC from Northern Maryland, where he worked as director and production manager for a large community theatre. He picked MBC as a place where his jack-of-all-trades nature will be encouraged and his passion for text will be honed.

DANIELLE GUY earned her BA in theatre at Mary Baldwin College and plans to one day start a Shakespeare program for at-risk teens.

JESSICA HAMLET earned a BA in theatre from Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, in 2008. She spent the next four years asking herself the question, "To be or not to be a graduate student?" Upon discovering the MLitt program, the answer was a resounding "to be!" Jessica hopes she has started on a path to living her bliss.

MOLLY HARPER earned a BFA in theater from Sweet Briar College in 2013. An Eastern Shore native, Molly decided to pursue her MFA at Mary Baldwin College so she could study more than one discipline of theater.

PATRICK HARRIS comes to MBC with a BA in anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which he earned in 2010. While there, Patrick worked in a student-run Shakespeare company and developed skills as an actor, director, and designer. Patrick hopes to gain fresh insight in the art of performance at MBC.

ADRIENNE JOHNSON is from Spotsylvania, Virginia, and is a 2013 graduate of Longwood University. She earned a BFA in theatre performance with a minor in English (British literature) and was attracted to Shakespeare and Performance's curricular blend of theatre and literature.

MEREDITH JOHNSON from Wilder, Kentucky, earned a BS in theater arts with a minor in humanities from the University of Louisville in 2012. She hopes to make herself as versatile as possible in the theater world with acting, teaching, and costuming as primary interests.

MEGAN MANOS earned a BA in literature from Ave Maria University. For the past eight years, she ran an annual summer Shakespeare camp for middle school students, and her experiences convinced her that the best way to study Shakespeare is through the combination of literature and drama.

LIA RAZAK is from Philadelphia, and she earned her BA in individualized study with a concentration in Shakespeare and education from New York University's Gallatin School in 2011. She interned at the American Shakespeare Center in winter 2012, and fell in love with the program's focus on pedagogy alongside scholarship and performance.

SUSAN SCACCIA studied acting and directing at Castleton State College and, in May 2013, earned an MAT in teaching theatre from the University of South Carolina. She plans to hone her skills as director, actor, teacher, writer and dramaturg at MBC.

MERLYN SELL earned her BA in theatre from Sonoma State University in northern California. After several years working as a playwright and director, she is looking forward to furthering her education and gaining new theatrical opportunities.

DEIRDRA SHUPE received her undergraduate degree in English from Hollins University. She is excited to learn more about Shakespeare and enter into a new chapter of her academic life.

AUBREY WHITLOCK hails from Modesto, California, and earned her BA in theatre arts from University of California at Santa Cruz in 2005 and her Master of Arts in Teaching from Chapman University in 2009. She taught high school English and drama for six years before coming to MBC, and she anticipates combining her teaching experience with her passion for performance and scholarship.

MOLLY ZEIGLER from Buffalo, New York, earned her BA in English with a theatre minor from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Her MA in Shakespearean studies is from the University of Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon. She is most proud of her work as a mom.

JORDAN ZWICK is a California native with a BA in theatre performance from Principia College in Illinois. Jordan looks forward to honing her acting, directing, and research skills.

‘This Great Flood of Visitors’

Summer 2013 brought several distinguished guests and presenters to Staunton and the MBC campus, and more visitors will share their expertise this fall.

The seventh annual **INTERNATIONAL MARLOWE CONFERENCE** was held at MBC and the Blackfriars Playhouse from June 25–28. Co-hosted by the Marlowe Society of America (the president is our own Paul Menzer) and the Shakespeare and Performance program, the conference featured papers from program alumni James Byers, Matt Carter, Tony Tambasco, and Michael Wagoner and keynotes from Garrett Sullivan, Leah Marcus, Laurie Maguire, and S.P. Cerasano.

THE SHAKESPEARE FORUM traveled to Staunton to perform a staged reading of *The Insatiate Countess* and provided a monologue workshop for members of the MFA Company.

BETH BURNS, director of the Hidden Room Theatre worked with the MFA Company in May. She will teach Directing II and direct the Company’s final show, *Fuente Ovejuna*, in spring 2013.

American Shakespeare Center guest director **ROB CLARE** and his wife, actor **REIKO AYLESWORTH**, came to the Blackfriars to present their current work in progress, a two-person collaboration on *Macbeth* with support from local and New York-based actors. The show was staged July 15 and 22.

ROSLYN KNUTSON will return to the S&P program this fall to teach Shakespeare’s Theatre and Research Methods.

S&P Represents at Prestigious Annual Conference

By Charlene V. Smith and Scott Campbell

The Shakespeare Association of America (SAA) is a 40-year-old organization dedicated to the advancement of the works and life of William Shakespeare. Each spring, the Washington DC-based organization holds an annual conference at which eminent scholars and emerging voices gather to discuss and celebrate the preeminent playwright.

The 2013 meeting in Toronto attracted scholars from North America and overseas. The three-day conference boasted nearly a dozen paper sessions, numerous seminars and workshops, and countless opportunities to interact with Shakespeare works and the scholars who study them. For those interested in modern North American performances of the plays, this year’s conference included an optional day trip to the Stratford Festival, as well as film screenings of three previous Stratford productions. Conference attendees were also treated to a special advance showing of Joss Whedon’s film adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Shakespeare and Performance program faculty, alumni, and students represented the program as presenters, volunteers, and ambassadors. Faculty members Ralph Cohen, Paul Menzer, and Matt Davies, and alumni Sarah Enloe, Cassandra Ash, Ann Pleiss Morris, and Chelsea Phillips participated in several seminars with topics that included theatre boundaries, performing archives, and Shakespeare’s social networks.

Previous MBC lecturers and Blackfriars Conference attendees James Loehlin, Farah Karim-Cooper, Lois Potter, William Proctor Williams, and Stephen Orgel also participated in this year’s conference. Program friends Beth Burns, Tom Cornford, and Roslyn Knutson attended the conference, and frequent S&P guest Tiffany Stern impressed a standing-room-only audience with her discussion of the printed notation of performance events occurring before and after early modern plays. Just a week prior to the conference, Stern had visited Staunton to present to S&P students about Q1 *Hamlet* and textual evidence for its genesis as a performance script taken down through short hand notation.

The SAA conference is an excellent opportunity for S&P alumni, students, and faculty to interact with other Shakespeare scholars. This gathering of dedicated scholars allows the program to further develop important relationships that directly benefit the education of its students.



kindness into the foundation of our academic community, a legacy stronger than any single other act.

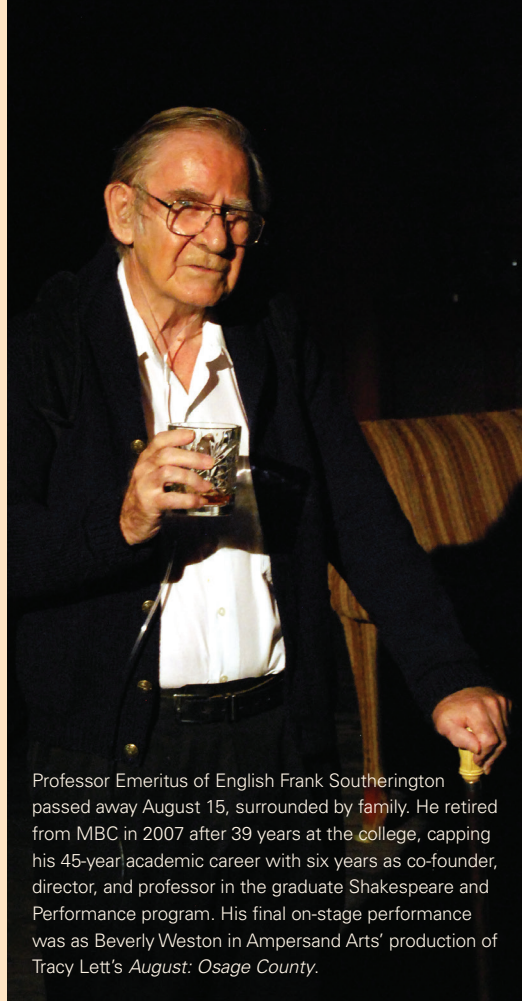
Even after his retirement, Frank kept an eye on the program without ever once intruding into the working life of its day-to-day operations. It must have been difficult for him to watch his replacement — that would be me — make rookie mistakes, but he never stuck his oar in without being asked. He served as a valued consultant with a grace that should instruct us all. He and wife Terry continued to open their home and pool to our incoming students, signaling instantly to new MLitters that they may have left their own homes, but they've found a new one.

Frank possessed a reservoir of generosity that understood the power of the human touch, the grace note, and the wit that invites rather than wounds. In his last year, as he watched along with the rest of us our first batch of students to negotiate the new MFA, he performed a final characteristic act of kindness. When our MFA students received their diplomas in May 2013, they each also received a facsimile of

the 1623 folio, with a bookplate indicating that the gift was from Frank. I said the following when announcing that generous act:

"I am thankful to Frank every day not just for gracefully retiring and allowing me to come home, but for the policies and protocols he put in place in the early years that provided the kind of solid foundation that allowed us to renovate our MFA experience. It is Frank's spirit and work that is baked into the foundations of this program, and we should be grateful to him not just today but every day. It was profoundly moving to me, then, that Frank stepped up to make these gifts possible through his own personal generosity. Frank can't be here today, due to health. But he's not far from here, over on Coalter Street. Let us all make enough of a noise that he can hear us from here."

We did. It is the intention of this program to continue to make the sorts of noises that Frank will always hear, and that is the reason that this column is not called, as usual, From the Director, but For the Director, as Frank will ever be.



Professor Emeritus of English Frank Southerington passed away August 15, surrounded by family. He retired from MBC in 2007 after 39 years at the college, capping his 45-year academic career with six years as co-founder, director, and professor in the graduate Shakespeare and Performance program. His final on-stage performance was as Beverly Weston in Ampersand Arts' production of Tracy Lett's *August: Osage County*.



PHOTO BY FRANCIS RTM BOYLE

UPCOMING EVENTS

MFA Company 2013–14 Season (Rogue Shakespeare)

Macbeth

October 5, 6, 12, and 13, 2013
theS.P.A.C.E.@107 E. Beverley Street

The Insatiate Countess

opening December 2013

Richard II

opening December 2013

Dr. Faustus

opening January 2014

MLitt Thesis Projects

by Ashley Pierce

Iago: October 8, 2013

Tybalt: November 4, 2013

Shylock: December 2, 2013

Blackfriars Playhouse

MLitt Staged Reading

Wisdom, Who is Christ

October 14, 2013

Blackfriars Playhouse

Thesis Project Festival

February 23 and 24, 2014

Blackfriars Playhouse



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