

Extreme Planning Brings British Troupe in Record Time

By Rick Gray

On-stage magic and serious behind-the-scenes scrambling made the fall 2012 visit by Actors From The London Stage a true highlight in the legacy of the Shakespeare and Performance program at Mary Baldwin College.

Mere weeks before the five-actor troupe arrived in Staunton to perform, teach, and mingle, no one at MBC or the American Shakespeare Center (ASC) had the slightest notion of hosting the renowned company. The story of how it came together illustrates the exceptional responsiveness and flexibility of the MBC graduate program, also known as S&P.

It began with Assistant Professor Matt Davies, a newly-minted PhD and a veteran of British theatre. Davies toured the United States for three years with Actors From The London Stage (AFTLS), a troupe specializing in full-length productions of Shakespeare's plays that use extreme casting.

Davies remains in regular communication with the troupe through its American base at the University of Notre Dame and he serves on the AFTLS board of directors. It didn't take him long to catch wind that his "old company" had unexpectedly lost a week's booking — and the wheels began to turn. He asked if two actors could come to

Staunton to lead workshops for third-year MFA students, who were about to begin rehearsing their own extreme casting shows.

In a fortunate turn of events, AFTLS asked if a full-company residency would be possible, including performances of Shakespeare's provocative *The Merchant of Venice*. Davies considered the challenge.

"I was asked whether we could deal with all five [actors] and organize a residency in less than three weeks," Davies said. "What with booking spaces, accommodation, rehearsal times, technical needs, and class visits, these things normally take months. I thought, 'no way,' gulped, and said... 'I'll call you back.'"

Davies' next call was to MFA Company Manager Doreen Bechtol; he needed to confirm the class schedule for that week. Then came the real test: putting the whole logistical nightmare before S&P Director Paul Menzer. As Davies recalls, Menzer's reply was, "impossible." Then, after the briefest caesura, "Do it!"

There was one more hurdle to negotiate. To perform under ideal conditions, AFTLS needed to use ASC's stage at the Blackfriars Playhouse, the home base of another touring company. Imagine the Boston Red Sox inviting the New York Yankees to play a home game at Fenway Park!

The team's next step was to talk to



PHOTO BY PETER RINGENBERG

Actors from the London Stage (l-r) Michael Palmer, Nicola Alexis, Noel White, Alinka Wright, and Henry Everett, perform a scene from *The Merchant of Venice*.

Professor Ralph Cohen, who was integral to the groundwork for both the American Shakespeare Center and Mary Baldwin's Shakespeare graduate program. Cohen relayed the potential visit to ASC co-founder and Artistic Director Jim Warren and Managing Director Amy Wratchford, and a deal was quickly reached. Actors From The London Stage would perform *The Merchant of Venice* at the Blackfriars (continued on p 5)

Roving and Learning with MBC's First MFA Company



PHOTO BY KAYLA PETERSON

By Rick Gray and Melissa Huggins

The inaugural year of the new curriculum model for Mary Baldwin College's Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Shakespeare and Performance has been a fantastic, "roving" success. Members of the first MFA company, Roving Shakespeare, are in the homestretch of a whirlwind year of rehearsing, performing, touring, and offering educational workshops. Inspired and guided by faculty

A dress rehearsal for Roving Shakespeare's extreme-casting production of *The Tempest* with (l-r) Rachel Ratkowski as Stephano, A.J. Sclafani as Caliban, and Elizabeth Rentfro as Trinculo.

partners, the Rovers — as they are now identified — should be proud of themselves and their extensive and inspiring work.

The company embarked on its journey in May 2012, just after students earned their MLitt degrees. The process began with company meetings during which the 13 members pitched different plays that would fulfill faculty-imposed requirements: an educational show for touring, two extreme-casting shows (with the company split into two casts), a Renaissance-styled show, and a show produced specifically for the Blackfriars Playhouse. After much

(continued on back cover)



PHOTO BY WOODS PIERCE

As the articles in this issue of *Folio* articulate, flexibility is not only the end but also the means of the work we do in MBC-Shakespeare and Performance. After all, we live in an increasingly hyphenated world, and the students and faculty of the Shakespeare and Performance program know what it's like to live in the hyphen: scholar-directors, actor-scholars, director-dramaturgs, professor-playwrights, teacher-writers, actor-entrepreneurs, and on and on in a bewildering Polonian array of combinations.

We pursue these hybridized roles by inclination, of course, but also by necessity. Theatre is, of all the literary arts, the most collaborative, and if there's a hidden word lurking in the shade of "collaboration," it's surely "flexibility." For collaboration is not simply taking advantage of the particular skills or special talents that every individual brings to the table, it's drawing ourselves out of our comfort zones, daring ourselves to flex to tasks we might not innately feel to be

our strength. In the world of improvisation, the creed is "yes, and." Well that's the creed here as well. Design a poster for an upcoming show? "Yes, and when do you need it?" Rejigger the casting for an upcoming show with one week's notice? "Yes, and what can I do to ease the task?" Book, house, feed, fete, and find a venue for a tour of British actors with three weeks' notice? "Yes, and oh my God what have we done?"

The point is, flexibility is part of the trade-craft of theatre. Collaboration is an ethic, flexibility a skill. We're after both at Mary Baldwin College, as a way of working and also as a way of being in the world. Collaboration and flexibility are our guiding principles. Think of it this way: If I forget my arrows but remember my bow, and you forget your bow but remember your arrows, alone we're unarmed, but together we still have a shot.

— Dr. Paul Menzer

Globe Visiting Scholar Praises Local Performing Arts Visionaries

By Melissa Huggins

"We can't be bogged down by the petty present!"

This snippet of advice from Theo Crosby, architect of the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe theater, was relayed to an eager audience by Patrick Spottiswoode, director of Globe Education, on his fall 2012 visit to the American Shakespeare Center (ASC). Spottiswoode shared Crosby's battle cry as part of his talk to Mary Baldwin College Master of Letters and Master of Fine Arts students just before receiving the Burbage Award at ASC's annual fundraising event. Named for a famously theatrical English family, the American Shakespeare Center's Burbage Award honors an individual "whose work behind the scenes has advanced the enjoyment of the works of Shakespeare for the

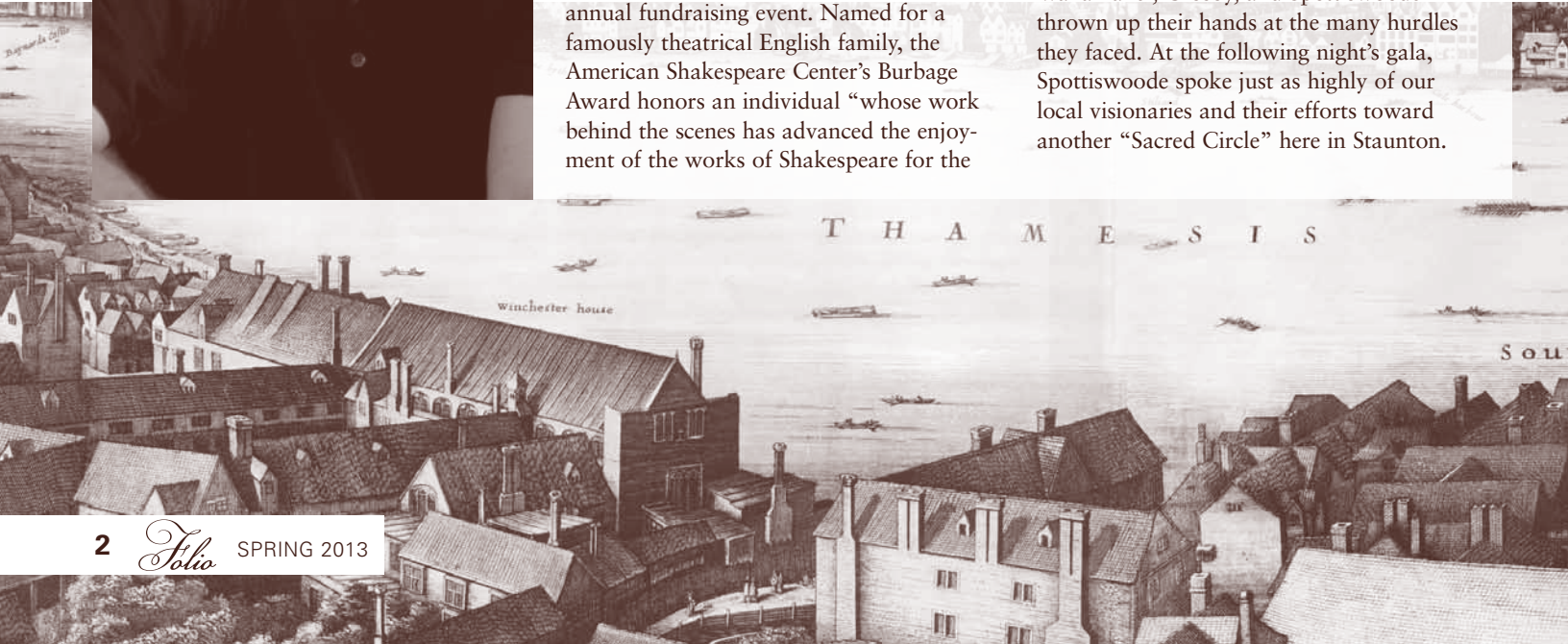
delight and instruction of the world."

Although he does not claim the initial vision of the reconstructed Globe on London's Bankside — he glowingly acknowledges Crosby and Sam Wanamaker for that inspiration — Spottiswoode communicated the infectiousness of that dream to his recent Blackfriars Playhouse audience. Demonstrating how Crosby's words have been taken to heart, Spottiswoode shared exciting news about the Globe's plans for constructing an indoor playhouse and expanding its library to include a wealth of Early Modern resources.

The wonder that is today's Globe in London might not have developed had Wanamaker, Crosby, and Spottiswoode thrown up their hands at the many hurdles they faced. At the following night's gala, Spottiswoode spoke just as highly of our local visionaries and their efforts toward another "Sacred Circle" here in Staunton.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GLOBE



Ralph on Rhetoric: Veteran Professor Takes Lessons on the Road

By Rick Gray

Ralph Alan Cohen, co-founder of the American Shakespeare Center and Mary Baldwin's Shakespeare and Performance (S&P) program, drew an enthusiastic reaction when he addressed attendees at the Shakespeare Theatre Association's annual conference.

The topic was dear to Cohen's heart: the value of rhetorical analysis to actors and directors of Shakespeare. Drawing on more than a decade of teaching rhetorical devices to Shakespeare graduate students at MBC, Cohen explained how a grasp of such devices enhances an actor's understanding of Shakespeare's text and enlivens and informs performance.

With the assistance of audience members Sarah Enloe '09 (American Shakespeare Center director of education), Kevin Costa of Chesapeake Shakespeare, and Jennifer Le Blanc of San Francisco Shakespeare, Cohen demonstrated how information conveyed by a basic understanding of rhetorical figures changes the delivery of a line.

He also discussed his own work as a director, illustrating his points with marked-up scripts from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Henry V*, his last two directing projects at the American Shakespeare Center (ASC).

The effectiveness of Cohen's presentation can be measured by the flood of requests he received to lead week-long workshops, for textbook recommendations, and even for copies of his marked-up scripts. Within a week of the conference, Cohen had

PHOTO BY MARK BITNER/PSC



heard from representatives of Annapolis Shakespeare, Livermore Shakespeare, the LA Women's Shakespeare Company, and the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival. Greg Robin Smith, of the Washington Shakespeare Festival, went so far as to pay a personal visit to Staunton to attend an ASC rehearsal and a performance of *The Country Wife* at the Blackfriars Playhouse.

Mary Baldwin students are thoroughly familiar with Cohen's legendary lessons on rhetoric. Along with studying verse scansion and learning to identify Shakespeare's bawdy puns, students in his Language of Performance course labor to master a daunting list of 40 common rhetorical devices. This knowledge is incorporated into every stage of their later work, beginning with the companion second-semester course, Performance of the Language, in which the first-year class produces a full-length Shakespearean play.

The conference was held at DeSales University (formerly Allentown College), home of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival and the alma mater of longtime ASC actor Miriam Donald.

Lodato Bids Farewell to Roving Shakespeare for Dream Job at ASC

By Melissa Huggins

A job offer in fall 2012 from the American Shakespeare Center (ASC) was a prime example of the quality of Mary Baldwin College's pioneer Master of Fine Arts troupe — named Roving Shakespeare — and the chance of a lifetime for then-student Liz Lodato. She was invited to join ASC's Tempt Me Further tour, filling an unexpected vacancy.

When she received the call, Lodato was out of town, studying her lines for Roving Shakespeare's production of *King Lear*, which opened in January. She had auditioned for ASC as a long shot, and she was deeply committed to the Mary Baldwin College group.

"Roving Shakespeare gives participants the genuine experience of working in a company environment. We were learning to exist within company — to work not only for oneself but also for the benefit of the team — as well as developing skills as actors and theatre practitioners in the broader sense," she said.

Lodato knew leaving the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) company would be bittersweet. She was well aware of the upheaval that her departure would create for (continued on p 5)



PHOTO BY MISCELLANEOUS MEDIA PHOTOGRAPHY



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Social Networking, Early Connections Fuel First-Years

By Rick Gray

The first-year experience in Mary Baldwin's Shakespeare and Performance (S&P) program has always been about personal relationships and team-building. In the second term, each entering class will spend a whole semester putting on a full Shakespeare play, complete with props, costumes, marketing, and program notes. This work, created for the course REN 531 (Performance of the Language), is an essential step toward the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program, in which the third-year class creates a season of five plays.

By general consensus, no first-year class has jelled as quickly as the Class of 2015 — or had as much fun doing it.

True to form for Mary Baldwin's S&P program, the latest crop of first years is a varied group. There are scholars and actors, and those with a foot in each camp. Some are straight out of college. Others have started their own theatre companies or held important positions with established companies. In addition to teaching, acting and directing, Bea Geppert has also enjoyed a long musical career. Kenan Minkoff, another theater and teaching veteran, holds a master's degree in psychology from New York University.

Did we say "varied"?

The remarkable unity of the class began when S&P Assistant Director for Operations Julie Fox suggested that Mara Sherman start a Facebook group for her future classmates and a handful of prospective students still deliberating between competing graduate programs. Sherman, an energetic, upbeat Californian, seemed the ideal person to use social media for this purpose.

Even as new members decided to join the class, those already on board began to coalesce as a group. Within days, Wellesley grad Nicola Collett and a scholarly Philadelphia tour guide named Melissa Huggins joined Sherman in posting mini-bios.

Then came North Carolina actor David Loehr — noting that his name is pronounced like that of a legendary British king — and the game was afoot. Classmates shared academic and theatre backgrounds, food choices, and personal trivia.

By June, far-flung classmates had begun negotiating housing partnerships, with the help of Fox's unparalleled knowledge of the Staunton housing market.

In July, people were starting to visit Staunton to scout promising apartments. These stopovers occasionally provided opportunities for hastily-arranged first meetings over coffee or a friendly drink. The entering class soon grew to its final, and ideal, membership of 18.

By August, numerous friendships had emerged — rarely based on face-to-face meetings. The first wave of students had begun claiming apartments and reporting back on the surprising charms of little Staunton, including tips on grocery stores, coffee shops, and their common delight with Staunton's excellent farmer's market.

Local theater and other productions also emerged as topics of discussion. Before classes even began, Sarah Blackwell, Nicola Collett, and Ashley Pierce had been cast in an alumni production of *Macbeth*, and Rick Gray was rehearsing for his role as Judge Randolph in a production of *A Few Good Men* at ShenanArts, a local community theatre.

Within a few weeks, triple-threat Rebecca Bailey would lend her extensive musical theatre skills to the MBC undergraduate theatre production of *Chicago*.

When the semester began, classmates also discovered each other's acting talents by volunteering repeatedly to do scene work for the Directing I class. Facing REN 531, the class was happy to learn that none of its actor members had exaggerated his or her on-stage competence. Moreover, scholars such as Huggins and Arlynda Boyer discovered acting potential they did not even know they had.

Professor Ralph Cohen's REN 500 (Introduction to Shakespeare) — which requires that students read the entire canon, complete with Norton introductions — called for a survival strategy. The Facebook network again played a role as an organizational tool for establishing several reading groups.

Early in the fall, a handful of classmates gathered at the invitation of the musically talented Scott Campbell. With Campbell playing guitar and accordion, and Clare von Rueden fiddling, the group explored their collective knowledge of folk, Celtic, and acoustic pop music. Loehr even offered a solo of "Modern Major General." Musical Thursday evenings continued for most of the semester, dying off only when end-of-term pressures proved too great.

Humor also carried the class through the rigors of its first semester. Paul Menzer, S&P's dapper director, provided a target for good-hearted pranks. The slightest of clues — such as Menzer's entering Rose Terrace with an apple in hand — resulted in "theme days" in his research class. One day, everyone brought an apple for the teacher. On another day, most of the class dressed up, in tribute to Menzer's impeccable attire. And then there was the day when dozens of cartoon bunnies — all togate — appeared in the classroom.

The semester ended with a final "class" at Cohen's mountain manor — complete with Thai food, gifts, adult beverages, and his reading of "The Reverent Wooing of Archibald" by P. G. Wodehouse.

As spring semester begins with REN 531's production of *Pericles* looming, the first-year class continues to bring its own brand of music, humor, and performance to the program.

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early in the week and — just two days later — Mary Baldwin would host the troupe at its black box, Fletcher Collins Theatre. One AFTLS member even carved out time to present acting workshops at James Madison University.

The collaboration, responsiveness, and can-do attitude that characterize the partnership between Mary Baldwin College and the American Shakespeare Center were in full effect throughout the process. A foundation was laid for another long-term international connection for the Shakespeare and Performance program and ASC.

“It was a blast!” Davies said. And so it was for the AFTLS troupe, who declared playing on the Blackfriars stage a high point of their tour.

“Actors From The London Stage was thrilled to become the only cast to play both the Cockpit and the Blackfriars in more than 400 years,” said Grant Mudge, producing artistic director for Shakespeare at Notre Dame. “Of course, they were different versions of each, but the crossing of divides was certainly a great experience for the troupe.”

her classmates, all of whom had become her close friends. But that group of friends, colleagues, and faculty was not going to let her pass up the incredible opportunity.

So, instead of taking the stage as Edmund in *King Lear* this winter, Lodato is performing the roles of Maria, Fabian, and Grisolan in the ASC touring troupe’s productions of *Love’s Labours Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Duchess of Malfi* — sometimes with as few as two days of rehearsal. According to Rick Blunt ‘06, a veteran actor at ASC, “It’s like she’s been with us all year.”

Roving Shakespeare quickly adapted to Lodato’s departure by recasting *Lear* with Elizabeth Rentfro stepping into the role of Edmund and Angelina LaBarre moving from stage manager into the role of Regan.

Lodato credits the training she received as a member of Roving Shakespeare for her ability to shift quickly between companies.

“I already had a sense of how to function in a company dynamic and experience in various production roles which is important on tour, where production jobs are divided amongst the actors,” she said. “My MFA

training at MBC prepared me in ways that more traditional training may not have.”

Lodato listed open communication, group decision making, and mutual support as benefits of the program. In addition, she learned practical skills such as time management, “loading in” and “loading out,” and how to lead workshops. Her experience with the transition became the topic of her MFA thesis, which she is finishing in tandem with her professional acting gig.

Although her dream job came around a bit earlier than she expected, Lodato is reveling in her work with ASC, and she keeps in touch with former classmates via texts and phone calls, which often include reports on their rehearsals.

Similarly, the Roving Shakespeare members look forward to seeing Lodato perform when the *Tempt Me Further* tour returns for its April residency at the Blackfriars.



ALUMNAE/

AMANDA ALLEN '12 and **DANIEL TROMBLEY '12** were married May 12, 2012, just a week before they earned their MFA degrees. The couple moved to Arizona, where their original work about Queen Margaret was produced in Phoenix and they have appeared in several shows, including *Twelfth Night* and *Doubt*.

ERIN BAIRD '10 moved back to her hometown of Fresno CA. She is a full-time theatre arts teacher at Edison High School and serves as education coordinator, actor, and a member of the artistic team for the Woodward Shakespeare Festival. She also works with the Kennedy Center's Any Given Child initiative as part of a group of artistic, political, business, and education-based leaders charged with transforming arts education for K-8 students in Fresno County. "My experience at MBC equipped me well for all of the great professional opportunities with which I've been presented, and I'm always glad to wear my 'alumniship' with pride!" Erin said.

ANDREW BLASENAK '08 is making final revisions to his dissertation at Ohio State University, and he plans to graduate in December with his PhD in theatre. Andy is also continuing his work on a collaborative project between Ohio State University and The Royal Shakespeare Company.

SARAH BUDGE '08 and **PATRICK BENTLEY '08** signed on for an extended run as husband and wife on October 19, 2012.

CASEY CALDWELL '11 was accepted by Northwestern University's English department as a fellow in its doctoral program.

JEREMIAH DAVIS '12 moved from Staunton to Chicago where he teaches combat, voice, acting, and scene study at the Chicago High School for the Arts. He was recently appointed artistic associate for Door Shakespeare Company in Bailey's Harbor, WI. He also made his professional counter-tenor debut in Handel's *Messiah* with Bella Voce and the Callipygian Players, and he is a dialect coach for the 20th anniversary production of *Beautiful Thing* for Chicago's Pride Films and Plays.

ROBERT DULLNIG (ATTENDED '08-'09) earned a Master of Studies in English Literature (1550–1700) from the University of Oxford in 2011. Robert attended St. Catherine's College.

BRIAN FALBO '12 is project manager with Epic Systems Corporation in Madison WI, where fellow alumnus **BRETT GANN '10** also works. The company provides health care information systems for clients. Brian also "fully intends" to find a way to keep acting, or at least be involved with theatre.

ALISHA HUBER '10 welcomed her second baby, Petra Eadaion Huber, on 10/1/12. She is doing well, and all are adjusting to life as a family of four. Alisha teaches theatre history as an adjunct instructor at Eastern Mennonite University.

MEGAN MCDONOUGH '05 has added motherhood to her resumé. She and husband Jim welcomed their first child, Godfrey Cartisano McDonough-Byrnes, on February 14, 2012. According to Megan, "He is, hands-down, our best production to date!"

VICTORIA REINSEL '10 is co-founder, director, and actor for Washington DC-based Brave Spirits Theatre. After producing *Two Gents* in 2011 and *Richard III* last summer, the company will present *Romeo and Juliet* for summer 2013. She is also program manager for Creative Kids in Silver Spring MD. Victoria is a teaching artist affiliated with the Shakespeare Theatre Company, a teaching artist for Imagination Stage, Inc., and an actor with Young Playwrights' Theater.

CASSIE ROBERTSON '09 quit her "day job" in Tampa FL and is a full-time editor of independent novels. She will be married to Steve Cox March 15, a date chosen because Steve's favorite play is *Julius Caesar* and Cassie can't resist a wedding date related to Shakespeare. Cassie's cat Cinna died and she has a new feline companion, Hermia.

TONY TAMBASCO '12 performed as Leonato in Sweet Tea Shakespeare's inaugural production of *Much Ado About Nothing* and worked as stage manager for the Adirondack Shakespeare Company's summer tour (*Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*) before joining the University of Delaware Resident Ensemble Players' Professional Theatre Training Program as assistant master electrician and sound engineer.

STUDENTS

SARAH BLACKWELL recently joined the American Shakespeare Center team as an education artist. She is in training — observing

and leading while also being observed. Sarah is also performing the role of Warwick (Richard Neville) in the spring MLitt production of *Margaret: A Tyger's Heart*, directed by S&P student Kelly Elliot. (Sarah's mother claims that she is a descendent of Warwick.)

STEPHANIE HOWIESON visited beginning acting classes at 12 colleges, such as North Carolina School for the Arts, to investigate and compare curriculum strategies. She plans to attend the Comparative Drama Conference in Baltimore in April 2013, and in August she has her sights set on the Association for Theatre in Higher Education's annual meeting in Orlando. She has applied for a summer internship at the Folger Library in Washington DC.

In April, **DANE LEASURE**, **CHARLENE SMITH**, and **RILEY STEINER** will perform in the Staged Reading Series of the Comparative Drama Conference at Stevenson University in Baltimore.

ELIZABETH LODATO is performing in the American Shakespeare Center's Tempt Me Further touring troupe.

REBECCA WRIGHT was pleased to play several small parts in the MFA company's production of *King Lear*, she said. The experience of acting in a Renaissance-style, cue-script process was "exhausting but promising in that I learned a lot about early modern acting style, choices, and rehearsal time."

FACULTY

DOREEN BECHTOL '12 joined the Shakespeare and Performance faculty as the first MFA company manager and director of training shortly after graduation. Read more about the new curriculum that focuses on the practical experience of forming an ensemble-based company in this issue of *Folio*, and check out Roving Shakespeare on Facebook and at www.actorscholar.com.

RALPH ALAN COHEN has been traveling and lecturing extensively. His recent presentations include a keynote address for the Shakespeare Theatre Association titled, "Sweet Smoke of Rhetoric: A Performance Enhancing Drug," and a keynote at the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference, "Listenership and Leadership in Shakespeare." He gave an invited lecture at Manhattan College titled, "Shakespeare Directs from the Tavern," and a keynote address at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Newcastle University Shakespeare Conference,

“Remaking Shakespeare at the American Shakespeare Center.” He also presented a lecture series at Folger Shakespeare Library.

MARY HILL COLE spent summer 2012 with 33 students at St. Anne’s College, Oxford, where she served as director of Mary Baldwin’s Virginia Program at Oxford. While in England, she was an external examiner for a doctoral dissertation on Elizabethan progresses at the University of Chichester. Her article on Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I was recently published in the book *Elizabeth I and the ‘Sovereign Arts.’* She also was MBC’s nominee for a teaching award sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges.

MARY COY ‘06 teaches voice for the S&P program for a second term. In spring 2012, she actor-managed a five-actor production of *Romeo and Juliet*, and, in August, she again worked the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, during which she saw more than 60 plays. She welcomed Roving Shakespeare actors to her 12th Shakespeare Festival at Nelson County Middle School where they shared their talents,

imaginings, and expertise with sixth-graders performing *Twelfth Night*. Mary continues to privately coach voice and acting, and she loves spending time with her first granddaughter.

MATT DAVIES defended his PhD while playing Richard, Duke of York, in Beth Burns’ *Rose Rage* for Hidden Room Theatre Company in Austin TX. The production picked up a bunch of B. Iden Payne awards, including best production and best cast. Matt also narrated scenarios for Dmitri Shostakovich’s *Hamlet* and William Walton’s *Henry V*, arranged by Christopher Plummer for the South Bend Symphony Masterworks series. In January, he played the title role in Roving Shakespeare’s Renaissance-style version of *King Lear*; no flying, but plenty of roving.

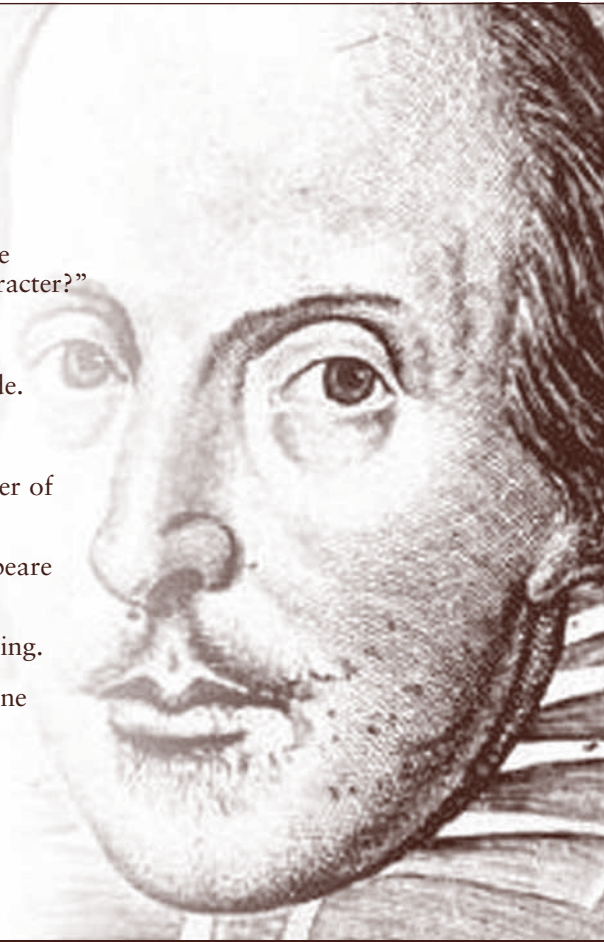
PAUL MENZER travelled to Austin, TX for opening night of his fifth play, *Invisible Inc.*, at Hidden Room Theatre. His recent lecture invitations span three continents and include “The Hours” at the International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon; a presentation titled, “Shakespeare, Anecdotally,” at

Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand; an appearance at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival titled, “Barnacles, Balconies, and Brothers: Romeo and Juliet and Theatrical Anecdotes;” and “The Merchant of Venice and the SAT” at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Paul also shared his insight and work in lectures for the Shakespeare Association of America, the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, and Hollins University.

JANNA SEGAL was invited to serve as the resident dramaturg for three plays in the Comparative Drama Conference’s Staged Reading Series: Alvin Eng’s *33 1/3 Cornelia Street*; Julie Lewis’ *Long Black Veil*; and Alice Shen’s *Unisex Bathroom*. She also dramaturged Jesse Waldinger’s *Mrs. Butler Returns* for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education’s New Play Development Workshop. Janna directed Edward Albee’s *Three Tall Women* at MBC and her essay, “The Aesthetic Resurrection of the ‘Death-Mark’d’ Lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*,” was published in the collection *Wonder in Shakespeare*.

You know you’re a Shakespeare geek when ...

- #10 ... the direction of a new friendship might well hang on your answers to the questions, “What is your favorite play?” and “Who is your favorite character?”
- #9 ... you concede that there are worse legacies than a “second best bed.”
- #8 ... you can make references to Dr. Who because you have seen That Episode.
- #7 ... you know what That Episode is.
- #6 ... you believe that size matters when comparing bookshelves (or the number of Complete Works in a personal collection).
- #5 ... you have to be reminded not to laugh at the funny bits during a Shakespeare performance until the rest of the audience has time to get the joke.
- #4 ... you know all of the funny bits (including the literary ones) without looking.
- #3 ... you have to restrain yourself from calling out, “epizeuxis!” when someone repeats a word.
- #2 ... your first day of class involves learning how to fight with swords.
- #1 ... you applied to this program ... I mean, who are we trying to kid?



discussion, the new company selected their ambitious season and christened themselves Roving Shakespeare to reflect their themes of “travel” and “journey.”

In September, Roving Shakespeare made its debut with a devised show. Living up to its name, members led the audience in a brisk ramble around downtown Staunton, taking advantage of architecturally interesting and scenic locations to present creative scenes correlated to the five plays in their upcoming season.

The educational production, *Comedy of Errors*, debuted at the Blackfriars in October. The stripped-down, playful production, designed to be either full-length or a 45-minute version for school touring, has been performed for students ranging from preschool to high school seniors. The Rovers have also taught workshops on embedded stage directions and *commedia del'arte* in schools from the Shenandoah Valley to Virginia Beach.

The next two shows opened simultaneously in December with mini-troupes of five actors each playing every role in two full-length productions. For this daunting

test, the company chose two stories featuring storms and shipwrecks, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Sea Voyage*.

Although challenging, the extreme casting shows helped the company prepare for mounting a fast-paced Renaissance-style show, similar to the American Shakespeare Center's Actors' Renaissance Season. The process is based on original practices by theatre troupes in Shakespeare's era. Company members work without a director or designer to present a production after a rehearsal period of about two weeks. Roving Shakespeare students also decided to test their mettle by working from cue scripts, which means that each actor was provided with a script that included only his or her lines preceded by a cue, such as the last line or end of a line spoken by the preceding character.

For their Ren show, Rovers chose to perform *King Lear*, and they invited Assistant Professor Matt Davies to play the title role. In addition to formidable acting chops, Davies brought considerable experience with director-less ensemble work, gleaned during

three seasons with Actors From The London Stage.

As company members were learning their lines over winter break, Rover Liz Lodato was offered the incredible opportunity to join American Shakespeare Center's touring troupe. Her fellow students could not have been more encouraging, but her exit meant the company needed to adapt quickly to her absence. Elizabeth Rentfro stepped in to play Edmund, and stage manager Angelina LaBarre took on the role of Regan. The rapid shuffling that occurred on- and off-stage for the production of *King Lear* showcased the key concept of the new company model: that members gain experience in a variety of responsibilities from costume design to directing to organizing publicity and are able to move fluidly between roles.

As You Like It, a performance designed to take advantage of the amazing Blackfriars Playhouse and directed by company member Jarom Brown, will cap off Roving Shakespeare's adventurous regular season in mid-March. A few weeks later, the company will reprise its complete season by presenting all five plays over three days.



PHOTO BY FRANCIS RTIM BOYLE

SPRING 2013 EVENTS

**MFA Company
(Roving Shakespeare)
Final Production**

March 18
7:30 p.m.
As You Like It
Blackfriars Playhouse

**Roving Shakespeare's
Festival of Plays**

March 31–April 2
Times vary
Including performances of
**Comedy of Errors, The Tempest,
The Sea Voyage, King Lear, and
As You Like It.**
Blackfriars Playhouse
Full schedule at
facebook.com/RovingShakespeare

MLitt Production

April 15 and 16
Time TBA
Pericles
Blackfriars Playhouse



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