

Folio

MLitt/MFA

FALL 2007



MASTER OF LETTERS/MASTER OF FINE ARTS
IN SHAKESPEARE AND RENAISSANCE LITERATURE IN PERFORMANCE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

New MLitt/MFA Director 'Fiercely Committed to Collaboration'

By Elissa Dubinsky



PHOTO BY TRINA NISHIMURA

Dr. Paul Menzer continues his long association with Staunton and MBC as new director of the MLitt/MFA program.

In becoming just the second director of Mary Baldwin College's unique program in Shakespeare and Renaissance literature in performance, Dr. Paul Menzer traded the sprawling countryside of University of North Texas for the quiet hills of Mary Baldwin College.

Menzer's relationship with Staunton, American Shakespeare Center (ASC), and MBC began in the early 1990s, when he worked as director of development for Shenandoah Shakespeare Express (SSE), grant writing and

fundraising for the fledgling company that would later become ASC. He resigned from SSE to attend graduate school, but remained connected to the company, teaching for Young Company Theatre Camp and serving on the ASC board of directors for the last 10 years. Menzer is also a member of the Globe II advisory committee working to bring a second theatre to fruition in Staunton. In 2005, Menzer became the first playwright to write original works for the recreated Blackfriars Playhouse. Inspired

by the stage and specific ASC actors, Menzer penned *Anonymous* and *The Brats of Clarence* which debuted, respectively, in 2005 and 2006.

After earning an MA in American literature from Georgetown University, Menzer served as managing editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly* from 1990 to 1993. He earned his PhD from University of Virginia in 2001 and accepted a teaching position at University of North Texas the same year. Menzer has authored more than half a dozen

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Teaching, Directing Beckon Southerington in Retirement

By Christine Parker

When Dr. Frank Southerington was in his office at Rose Terrace, his door was open and a sliding rocker and jar of chocolates invited visitors to have a seat. "He's there, he listens, he advises, he cares," said graduate student Andrew Blasenak. "His office is a haven in the storm that is the life of a graduate student."

Frank — as he insists people call him — retired after 39 years at Mary Baldwin College. He feels fortunate to finish a 45-year academic career with six years as co-founder, director, and teacher in the MLitt/MFA Program. "A wonderful way to end a

career," Southerington said.

Southerington earned a BA from University College, London, and his MLitt and DPhil from Magdalen College at Oxford University. He began his career teaching "all of English literature" in Sweden, from 1962 to 1964. He returned to graduate school at Oxford for a year before moving to Finland to teach from 1965 to 1968.

Southerington's scholarly credits include editorship of the Bobs-Merrill Library of Literature's *Jude the Obscure* and *Hardy's Vision of Man*, numerous articles and lectures on Thomas Hardy, translations

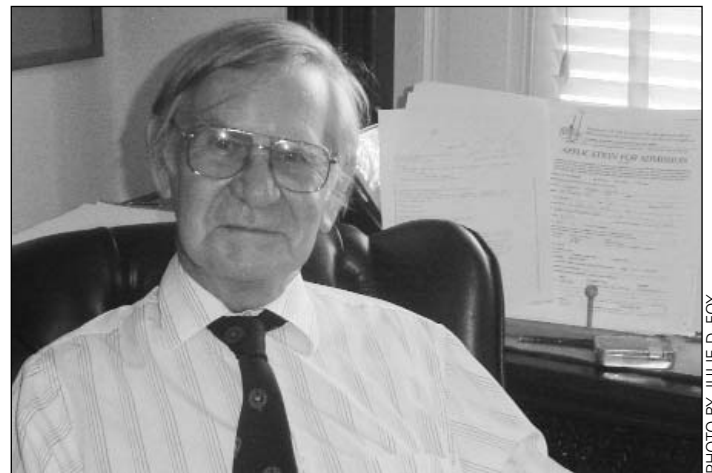


PHOTO BY JULIE D. FOX

Dr. Frank Southerington demonstrates his welcoming presence in his office.

of works by Scandinavian dramatists August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen, and a nearly complete biography on Strindberg titled *Naked in the Marketplace*. Prior to his arrival at MBC 39 years ago, his first higher education teaching

position in the States was a summer job teaching Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "I've come full circle in the US," noted

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Visiting Scholars Bring Invaluable Energy, Expertise

Instant Shakespeare with Director Patrick Tucker

By Andrew Blasenak

Patrick Tucker, one of the initiators of the original staging practices movement, visited Staunton for 10 days in March 2007. About 30 years ago, Tucker considered how Shakespeare's own company might have rehearsed and came to the radical conclusion that it would not have held rehearsals. Combining his passion for directing Shakespeare at The Royal Shakespeare Company with experiences as a TV soap opera director, Tucker developed techniques that allow actors to perform with little or no rehearsal time. He co-founded the now-disbanded Original Shakespeare Company to do just that.

While in Staunton, Tucker shared his techniques in classes, lectures, and coaching sessions for MLitt/MFA students and American Shakespeare Center actors. He also presented a workshop on acting for film and collaborated with his niece and fellow visiting scholar, Tiffany Stern, to discuss their historical research methods.

Although some scholars argue the authenticity of Tucker's assumptions, for many students his techniques help unleash the most life out of the text in the shortest time. His approach involves the use of cue scripts — scrolls that contain only the actor's own lines preceded by three-word cues. Actors must rely on Shakespeare's words to play their scenes. The method forces actors to command scenes when they speak and to play along with other actors as they listen for their next cue.

MLitt/MFA students discovered that this moment-by-moment interaction causes a scene to become vibrant. The onus is on the actor to examine the text for clues on how to perform each speech, so Tucker developed rules that help decipher coded stage directions that composers Heminge and Condell built into the *First Folio*, and only the *First Folio*. For example, capitalized words almost invariably reveal the skeleton of meaning for a speech, while oddly spelled words encourage an actor to consider the intention behind each different spelling, as when Costard, in *Love's Labour's Lost* cries, alternately, "Mee?" "Me?" "Still mee?" and "O me."

Another example are the stage directions embedded in the words "thou" and "you." Tucker proposes that speaking the familiar "thou" denotes that an actor stand one foot away from the character he

is addressing. The more formal "you" instructs an actor to deliver the line from 10 feet away. Students agreed that these text clues added powerful content to staged scenes such as Hotspur's conflicting martial and marital musings in *Henry IV*. These and other theories are summarized in Tucker's book, *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*.

Tucker enabled MLitt/MFA actors to discover a remarkable method for making Shakespeare's words "work" on stage. Cast members in the University Wits' summer company employed Tucker's text-based acting rules in preparation for performing *The Comedy of Errors* in regional venues. Tucker's legacy is alive and well in Staunton.

Costume Artist Explains Intricacies of 'Original Practice'

By Anna Gonzalez

The MLitt/MFA program welcomed visiting artist Jenny Tiramani, former associate designer at London's Globe Theatre, in March. Tiramani worked as master of costume and master of properties and hangings at the Globe between 1995 and 2005. During that time, she received the Laurence Olivier Theatre Award for Best Costume Designer for her work on the Globe's critically acclaimed, all-male production of *Twelfth Night*. Considered the definitive expert on Early Modern clothing construction, Tiramani continued costuming original practice productions after leaving the Globe for Artistic Director Mark Rylance and his company, Phoebus' Cart.

A costume is deemed "original practice" only if the materials, pattern cutting, construction methods, and context of the clothing are as consistent as possible with Elizabethan and Jacobean historical evidence, Tiramani said. An unusual but valuable source for her research is clothing found in graves dating to Shakespeare's era. Other sources include Early Modern references to clothing, both onstage and off, and careful study of clothing in genre paintings and portraits.

Tiramani presented lecture-demonstrations to MLitt/MFA classes, covering topics from cutting and hand stitching to research and design for the



PHOTO BY PAMELA S. JOHNSON

The MLitt/MFA program shared costumer Jenny Tiramani with James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance, who were in the midst of preparations for a Spring '08 production of *Twelfth Night*.

stage. Tiramani dressed student volunteers in two handmade costumes from the Globe's stock to show that as many as three or four people are needed to tie and pin an actor into his or her reproduction-quality costume. Students were delighted to see a handful of 400-year-old straight pins that were excavated from the original site of the Rose Theatre from beneath the stage and from under the long-gone seats of wealthy patrons.

Clothing choices in Early Modern daily life were strictly controlled by laws, Tiramani explained, and a person could be arrested for dressing above his or her station. This meticulous code for attire is the reason that an actor's costume immediately communicated status information about a character to the Shakespearean audience. Tiramani's public lecture at Blackfriars Playhouse concluded with an enlightening demonstration of how candles on stage affect costume choices.

Commedia dell'arte and Me

By Kat Hermes

I was privileged to study with Maestro Antonio Fava for a six-day intensive *Commedia dell'arte* class this summer. Inarguably the world expert on *Commedia*, Fava is founder of Teatro del Vicolo and Scuola Internazionale dell'Attore Comico (International School of Comic Acting) in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

To begin the session, Fava discussed the history of *Commedia* and gave an overview of major characters: the servant, Zanni; the young lovers, Flavio and Isabella; the old men, Pantalone and Dottore; and the braggart, Capitano. That afternoon, we began to learn the specific style of movement that belongs to *Commedia's* first character, Zanni. We were shocked by the physical challenge posed by something as seemingly restful as "Zanni sleeping." Fava taught by demonstration, and there was something daunting about watching this small, portly man — perhaps twice the age of the average student — caper easily around the room while we sweated behind him. I left class with aching knees and my back twisted into the Zanni stance. I made a pledge to get into better shape (or at least learn to tell my left from my right).

The physical demands eased on the second day. We worked on movements for the lovers, which were more fluid than Zanni's and required less hopping. Much of the physical difficulty I experienced had come from my attempt to replicate each move perfectly, as though I were learning a choreographed dance. That kind of perfectionism causes tension, making the movements both more difficult and more robot-like. Fava emphasized that *Commedia* characters should be free and natural, an exaggeration of normal behavior instead of a complete departure from it.

When we had practiced a character's movements for a few hours, we improvised brief scenes, with Fava's guidance. This was our chance to try out the authentic leather character masks, handmade by Fava.

Each day we added a new character, and each day ended with prepared scenes containing all of the characters we had learned so far. Fava gave us classic *Commedia* scenarios and we filled in *lazzi* (bits of comic action). As more and more characters were added to our repertoire, the challenge was to keep each character involved, and continuing to advance the plot. I found myself seeing potential *lazzi* everywhere I looked.

Those of us who performed in the summer Wits' production of *The Comedy of*



Antonio Fava (front, left) with MLitt/MFA students and participants from the Association for Theatre Movement Educators

PHOTO BY RALPH ALAN COHEN

Errors found that the class influenced our rehearsal work. *Commedia* roles and Shakespeare's characters — particularly those in early comedies — are similarly highly presentational, encouraging a lot of audience contact, and both employ character types that require an actor to build his or her character from the outside in.

Fava often took a few moments to share the history of *Commedia* when explaining characters, but the focus of his class remained more practical than scholarly. Learning to perform *Commedia* has certainly increased my appreciation of a fascinating and historical art form.

Stern Showcases Former Part of 'Scholarship and Stagecraft'

By Sara Landis

The 2007 Ides of March brought a delightful series of visitors to Staunton. Among them was Tiffany Stern, noted Shakespearean scholar and longtime friend and supporter of Mary Baldwin's MLitt/MFA and American Shakespeare Center (ASC). Stern, a lecturer at Oxford University and author of *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* and *Making Shakespeare*, specializes in theatre history from the 16th to the 18th century and book history and editing. MBC students, ASC actors, and community members enjoyed Stern's lectures and discussions and the additional treat of seeing Stern interact with her uncle, theater practitioner Patrick Tucker (see "*Instant Shakespeare*," p. 2).

Tucker and Stern represent the ideal symbiotic relationship between scholarship

and stagecraft, when one remembers how constructive arguments frequently produce the best artistic results. Although they frequently disagree, their fraternal humor and untiring respect for one another prevail. Their interactions exemplify the balance between scholarship and performance that is embodied in the missions of ASC and the MLitt/MFA program. During Stern's lecture on the presence and function of printed materials in 16th-century playhouses, Tucker interrupted with, "Say, Tiffy ..." which, after her articulate and considered response, elicited anecdotes regarding life with "Uncle Patrick."

As the scholastic foil to Tucker's practical theatre approach, Stern answered each question with studied patience. Fiercely proud of her research, Stern graciously considered suggested ideas while upholding her studied beliefs. Expertly referring students to a variety of sources confirming her answers to questions, Stern nevertheless concluded every response with the concession that further research might yield different answers. Stern's innovative approach to theatrical research involves starting with the more thoroughly

documented 17th century and working her way back through history. Tracking theatre practices via original documents, Stern theorizes interpretations for obscure documents by examining their evolution.

Stern's research, easily accessible via her books, provides the aspiring Shakespearean scholar with a strong foundation in original practices. Virtually required

reading for anyone associated with Blackfriars Playhouse, Stern's books supply accurate information in her concise and clear voice. Although not as stimulating as listening to her in person, Stern's publications afford a close second.



British visiting scholars Patrick Tucker and Tiffany Stern after a shared presentation at the Blackfriars Playhouse.

PHOTO BY RALPH ALAN COHEN

17 Roles, One (Short) Season

By Christine Parker

In a daring move three years ago, American Shakespeare Center (ASC) launched the Actors' Renaissance Season to immerse actors more deeply into performing the way Shakespeare and his contemporaries may have done. Without directors or designers, actors rehearse with scripts containing only their own lines and cues, they find their own costumes and props, and each show "goes up" after just days of preparation.

MFA graduate Rick Blunt '06 and MLitt candidate Brett Sullivan Santry '07 joined ASC actors in presenting a record five plays during the successful 2007 Renaissance Season. They amassed an impressive string of roles: Blunt portrayed Lucianus and Cornelia in the production of *Hamlet's First Quarto*; Roderigo and ensemble in *The Duchess of Malfi*; Laird, Usher 1, and Citizen 1 in *The Brats of Clarence*; Plutarchus and Shackles in *The Devil is an Ass*; and ensemble in *Pericles*. Santry played Voltemar and Fortenbrasse in *Hamlet*; Ship's Master in *Pericles*; Grisolan and the Doctor in *Duchess*; Privy John, Messenger 2, and Citizen 2 in *Brats*; and Pitfall in *Devil*.

Each play was performed after abbreviated rehearsal times — *Hamlet* in 10 days, and *The Devil Is an Ass* in three to four — and the performances were "raw and imperfect," according to Santry. The audience was drawn into the excitement of the process as the actors essentially rehearsed onstage to polish their performances.

"I wanted the challenge of 'practicing what we preach,'" Santry said. "I believe if you're not engaged in performance on some level, you're missing out on a huge part of the education."

Cohen's Teaching, Writing Garner Awards

Ralph Alan Cohen, professor of MLitt/MFA, recently received MBC's Virginia Worth Gonder Shakespeare Fellowship in Theatre. Gonder's husband, Richard, established the fellowship as a memorial to his wife, MBC Class of 1939. Cohen also earned a 2007 Distinguished Achievement Award from the Association of Educational Publishers for his newest book, *ShakesFear and How to Cure It*.

MFA Student Explores Roles of Author, Actor

Why is Brian O'Connor smiling? The expression started to creep across his face in summer 2001, when O'Connor's love of theatre led him to audition for a community production of *Henry IV*, directed by Dr. Frank Southerington, Mary Baldwin College professor emeritus of English and former director of MLitt/MFA. That fateful meeting inspired O'Connor's decision to enter the program's charter class. O'Connor's MLitt thesis project was presented at Blackfriars Playhouse on April 23, 2003 as part of American Shakespeare Center's annual celebration of Shakespeare's birthday. The project combined playwriting with a study of actor's memorization techniques.

"After finding a reference in *The Taming of the Shrew* to a [wedding feast] that is not depicted in the play, I wrote that scene (400 lines), which gave the actors a context in which to work," O'Connor said. Seven ASC actors and four community actors worked undirected from handwritten sides with an onstage prompter for just four hours before the performance. "It was amazing," O'Connor said. "The audience loved what transpired on stage, and we all caught a glimpse of how an Early Modern theatrical event may have looked."

O'Connor continued his study of *Shakespearian Actor Learning Characteristics* and the pursuit of his MFA at MBC. His sequence of experimentation has centered on original text, comparison of prose and verse retentions and recall rates, and full text versus cue scripts. O'Connor said he and other actors, "...are charting new investigative ground together, while jointly learning about the intricacies of memorization techniques." The use of original text that the actors cannot access until shortly before a performance is a key component of this empirical research.

O'Connor is smiling again because his MFA thesis was performed at Blackfriars Playhouse August 27. The new project — an extension of his MLitt research — tracked a dramatic work from the author's hand through to its first performance and explored the role of an author/actor in an accelerated production process. O'Connor wrote a five-act Elizabethan-style play titled *Landrus & Cassia*. "It's a work in verse with about 40 percent rhyme," he explained. A romantic comedy, the play takes a lighthearted look at the seedier side of conquest and defeat in 7th century Lombard, Italy. Beyond playwriting, abbreviated rehearsal process, and performance, O'Connor's study also included a bibliographic element as he measured the creation times for a handwritten playbook, promptbook, and actors' cue scripts. "The next play is in the works, and the bibliographic interest in early modern play texts remains an important area of my theatre research," he said.

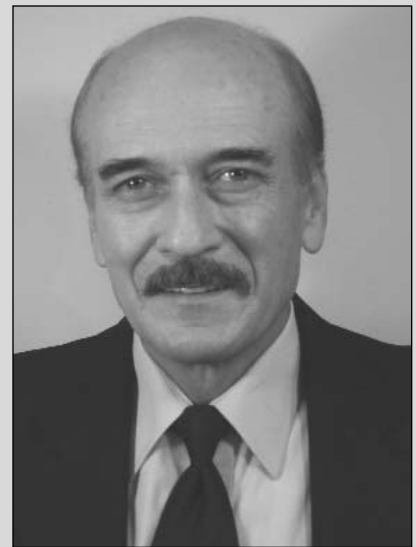




PHOTO BY KATE EASTWOOD NORRIS

Ready for their final exam performance in the MLitt/MFA course REN 686: Clown are (l-r) Eve Speer, Rob Smith, Christina Sayer, Ryan McCarthy, and Chelsea Phillips.

Wits Perform The Comedy of Errors True to Original Form

By Kat Hermes

Riding high on the success of their touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in summer 2006, the University Wits staged *The Comedy of Errors* at several theaters in the Shenandoah Valley during this year's warm and muggy months. The Wits, the primary student-run organization of the MLitt/MFA program at Mary Baldwin, brought the same lively performance style and devotion to Elizabethan staging practices to one of the Bard's lesser-known comedies.

The company is named The Lord Frank and Lord Ralph's Men, in honor of Dr. Frank Southerington, MBC professor emeritus of English and former MLitt/MFA director, and Dr. Ralph Alan Cohen, professor at MBC — the Wits' two biggest sponsors. The troupe's actors included MFA students Andrew Blasenak, Elissa Dubinsky and Kat Hermes, MLitt students Raven Clafin, Danielle Farrar, Sara Landis, Christine Parker, Chelsea Phillips, and Lauren Shell, MBC undergraduate Shakira Ayers '09, and JMU student Valah Steffen-Wittwer.

As both actors and scholars, members are committed to marrying historical research and theatrical effectiveness. Recreating the business structure of Shakespeare's company, each actor is a financial shareholder and bears responsibility for the logistical and business elements of the tour.

The company's rehearsal methods are based upon scholarly conjecture about how Early Modern companies could have worked, as well as observation of the American Shakespeare Center's Renaissance Season productions. Rather than working under a director, like a modern company, actors collaborate to stage the production themselves. Each actor works from a cue script containing only his or her lines and the last few words of the preceding line.

The company is also devoted to original practices in performance, emphasizing audience interaction and engagement with the text over spectacle and technical effects. During the performance, audience and actors share the same light, enabling the actors to speak directly to the audience. Several actors play multiple roles, and many women play male characters, reflecting, in reverse, the Elizabethan convention of female characters played by men. Actors also provide music for the production, and all music is acoustic. The lack of elaborate set pieces and technical requirements means that the show is easily adaptable to a variety of venues.

The Comedy of Errors is in many ways a play about recovering the past and finding what has been lost, which is exactly what the company intends. By committing to original practices in rehearsal and performance, the troupe hopes to strip away centuries of preconceptions about how Shakespeare should be played to uncover something closer to the spirit of original performances.

More Than Just Clowning Around

By Christina Sayer

Passers-by at the dance studio in Mary Baldwin's Physical Activities Center in June might have seen a strange scene: Five adults wiggling, shaking, and kicking their way across the floor in sync with blaring music. Therapy for the melophobic, perhaps? Not at all! They were simply witnessing a slice of Kate Eastwood Norris's clowning course.

This year marked the fourth time Norris, an American Shakespeare Center (ASC) resident troupe alumna, has taught the fine art of acting like a clown to MLitt/MFA students. She consistently leads each class with passion and panache in an environment of supportive, yet challenging, creativity. Norris' extensive classroom and professional experience culminated in her receipt of the 2007 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Resident Play for her acclaimed performance as Puck in a Folger Theatre production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Five MLitt/MFA students honed their comedic skills under Norris' watchful eyes. Through improvisational exercises and scene work, each student created two scenes and a song that were incorporated into a final performance. The scenes featured an inept backpacker, an over-eager traveling salesman, a winsome window-washer, a love-struck drunk, and an embattled scullery maid. The show delighted fellow MLitt/MFA students, faculty, staff, ASC actors, and community members who enjoyed hearty laughs at the morning performance.



PHOTO BY CLAIRE NEWMAN-WILLIAMS

Kate Eastwood Norris

COMMENCEMENT 2007

The 32 MLitt and MFA students who graduated in 2006–07 represent the largest graduating class in the history of the program. The winner of this year's Ariel Award for Outstanding Service and Leadership was MFA graduate Katherine Mayberry, and the winner of the new Andrew Gurr Award for Outstanding Thesis was MLitt graduate Sarah Ann Ill.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE PARKER

May 2007 MLitt graduate Robert Bowen Smith celebrates with his wife, Kiley, and daughter, Ella.

Fox Brings English, Arts Background to Assistant Directorship

When Michelle Whytal's husband accepted a new position in another part of the state last year, she decided to move with him. Whytal had looked after an uncountable number of critical details for students, faculty, other MBC staff, program applicants, and alumnae/i since the MLitt/MFA program began in 2001. Her legacy will be hard to follow.

Exit Whytal in January 2007. Enter art history teacher and English maven Dr. Julie Drinkard Fox. For four years prior to her arrival at MBC, Fox taught general education art history courses at Blue Ridge



Fox

Community College and James Madison University (JMU), where she previously earned a BA in English. Fox holds a master's degree in art education and doctorate in fine arts from Texas Tech University. She attributes

her love of Shakespeare to her fortunate presence as a student in the very first Shakespeare class taught by Dr. Ralph Cohen (now professor in MLitt/MFA at MBC) at JMU in 1974. "I liked Shakespeare in high school, and even attended a couple of performances at the Folger Theatre in 1972 and 1973 ... but Ralph's enthusiasm for Shakespeare was beyond contagious," she said.

Fox supports the academic arm of the MLitt/MFA program. "The program's focus on 'the marriage of scholarship and stagecraft' has produced such an exciting course of study that I am constantly aware of how lucky our students are to be here." She also enjoys what she calls the "laugh therapy" of attending even more performances at Blackfriars than when she served there as an usher.

Fox is glad Whytal has not been a stranger. The students, too, were thrilled to see Whytal at the MFA production of



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE PARKER

Michelle Whytal with Dr. Frank Southerington at Rose Terrace following Commencement 2007.

Hamlet in March, the MLitt/MFA Spring Thesis performances in April, and at the Rose Terrace Commencement festivities in May. Like Whytal, Fox is pleased to support the MBC and American Shakespeare Center partnership.

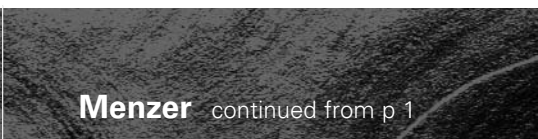


Southerington continued from p 1

Southerington, who will teach Chaucer again for undergraduates this fall, this time at Mary Baldwin.

It seems that Southerington will not be "packing in" his teaching or his literary ambitions. He first intends to reach a personal goal by finishing his Strindberg biography. "I speak Swedish badly and read it well," he wryly admits. He continued his decades of acting and directing at Verona's Oak Grove Theater by directing the farce *Donkey's Years* this summer. "It's *Donkey's Years*, not ears," Southerington said, explaining that the idiom "donkey's years" is the British equivalent of America's, "a coon's age."

Don't fret that the annual pool party for new MLitt students or the winter holiday celebration hosted by the Southeringtons will cease. After all, Frank is not retiring very far away. The home he shares with wife Theresa Southerington, MBC professor of theatre, is separated from the college by just a backyard fence, so students might come looking for conversation ... and a York Peppermint Pattie.



Menzer continued from p 1

articles on Renaissance drama and edited *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, the first book to document practices associated with Blackfriars Playhouse. Menzer awaits publication of his latest book, *The Hamlets: Cues, Qs, and the Remembered Text*.

Menzer is "fiercely committed to the idea of collaboration" in his own scholarship and creative work and in his vision for MLitt/MFA. Mirroring the founding principles of the MBC program, he notes, "My scholarship is rooted in playhouse practices."

He envisions a broadening of the REN 500 gateway course to include practical components, which would meld literary and theatrical perspectives on Shakespeare from the beginning of a student's tenure. Menzer also hopes to expand the MLitt/MFA program. He will propose a fundraising venture to increase faculty and enlarge rehearsal and educational spaces, and he wishes to cultivate the stagecraft aspects of the program by bringing in additional influential artists to lead more workshops and create additional performance opportunities. Menzer arrived July 2 to launch his plans for making Staunton and MBC the preeminent destination for young Shakespearean scholars.

Williams Teaches (Textual) Self-Defense



PHOTO BY RALPH ALAN COHEN

Williams (center, with MLitt/MFA students) taught students in the spring course Drama Texts, a topic he describes as “textual self-defense for theater practitioners and teachers.” Williams showed students how to defeat what Shakespeare scholar Thomas L. Berger refers to as the “band of terror,” or the textual footnotes in modern editions of Shakespeare. Students learned to read English Secretary Hand (the most common form of Early Modern English handwriting) and how books were printed and copyrighted. Each student was assigned to research a play, and, after they found out all they could from secondary sources about their quarto editions, students saw the authentic versions on a field trip to the Folger Shakespeare Library (pictured).



PHOTO BY ANTONIA FORSTER

MBC guest instructor of self-defense William Proctor Williams (r) is professor emeritus of English at Northern Illinois University and senior lecturer in English at University of Akron. He has published widely on English Renaissance literature, particularly on Shakespeare and the drama and on bibliography and textual criticism. His book (with Craig S. Abbott), *An Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies*, is set to be released by the Modern Language Association in a fourth edition. Most recently, Williams edited three plays (*Macbeth*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*) in the Sourcebooks/Methuen Shakespeare series and he is working on two editions of *Titus Andronicus*, one for the Sourcebooks/Methuen series and one for New Variorum Editions of Shakespeare.

MFA Students Re-Imagine Hamlet *by Eve Speer*



PHOTO BY ANDREW BLASENAK

Back row (l-r): Francis RTM Boyle (Claudius), Anna Northam (Hamlet), Lesley Larsen (Ophelia, Gravedigger), James Mainard O’Connell (Barnardo, Player Musician, Fortinbras) Angela K. Boyle (Francisco, Player Queen), Anna JL Christiansen (Laertes, Reynaldo, Lucianus), Eve Speer (Polonius, Priest), Heidi Grumelot (Rosencrantz, Osric, Marcellus), Robert Bowen Smith (Guildenstern). Front row: Corey Vincent (Ghost of King Hamlet, Player King, Gravedigger), Chelsea Collier (Horatio), Katherine Mayberry (Gertrude)

Members of the MFA Class of 2007 joined forces under the direction of Dr. Jacquelyn Bessell, MBC assistant professor, a.k.a “Captain Jaq,” to tackle Shakespeare’s daunting *Hamlet*. An unusual choice was made to cast a female actor, Anna Northam, in the title role. Rehearsals for the production began during the fall 2006 Acting III course, and continued through spring 2007. The actors developed new songs, movements, and choreography that illuminated Shakespeare’s famous words. American Shakespeare Center actor and Society of American Fight Directors-certified teacher JP Scheidler choreographed elaborate fight scenes. The show opened with a chorus of actors singing Hamlet’s words from his love letter to Ophelia, set to student Chelsea Collier’s original melody:

*Doubt thou the stars are fire
Doubt that the sun doth move
Doubt truth to be a liar
But never doubt I love.*

The opening homage to the constancy of love stayed with the audience as they watched Laertes bid a final goodbye to his father and sister and as Hamlet wrestled with the loss of his father. The opening sentiment rendered each loss more heartbreaking than the one before, until Ophelia’s madness seemed almost logical. The cast performed for sold-out crowds at Virginia’s Junebug Center, then came back to Staunton to perform twice to packed houses at Blackfriars Playhouse.

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

- # 10 A song isn't just a song anymore; it's a series of rhetorical devices waiting to be discovered, another text to be scanned. (Sarah Ann Ill)
- # 9 The idea of an entire afternoon free to do research makes you so giddy you have to sit down. (Chelsea Phillips)
- # 8 After a devastating car wreck, the first thing you reach for from shattered auto remains is your *Norton Shakespeare* (the big green brick); and the only thing you rescue from your burning house before reaching for the fire extinguisher is (again) your *Norton*. (Corey Vincent)
- # 7 You refuse to quote *Romeo and Juliet* to your lover because it's "overdone." (Andrew Blasenak)
- # 6 You have more than one tie decorated with Shakespeare's face or Shakespeare's signature in Secretary Hand — and you know what Secretary Hand is! (Christine Parker)
- # 5 You own more than one copy of the *Folio* facsimile (paperback and hardback), or more than one anthology of Shakespeare's plays. (Marsha Douglas, Visiting Scholar from University of Maine)
- # 4 You know Timon is not just the meercat from *The Lion King*. (James Mainard O'Connell)
- # 3 Your license plate says "SHKSPRE" (Christina Sayer) or "QUEENMAB" (Corey Vincent), or your email address begins with "MUSEOFFIRE" (Katherine Mayberry).
- # 2 You giggle when you see the Hollar drawing (second floor, Blackfriars Playhouse) because you know *exactly* what those horses are doing. (Sara Landis)
- # 1 You become incensed when someone mentions the authorship controversy, and you own (and wear) a T-shirt that reads "If you mention the Earl of Oxford ONE MORE TIME, I'll stab you in the face!" (Jeremy Fiebig)

UPCOMING EVENTS

FALL THESIS PROJECT FESTIVAL

6 pm, November 18 and 19
Blackfriars Playhouse
Admission is free

Featuring MLitt students Megan Bayonet, Anna Gonzalez, Katherine Hermes, Lauren Mignogno, and Christine Parker; and Noah Jones' MFA Directing project *The Roaring Girl* by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton

MFA ACTING PRODUCTION

March 16 and 17, 24 and 25

SPRING THESIS PROJECT FESTIVAL

April 13–15



MASTER OF LETTERS/MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN
SHAKESPEARE AND RENAISSANCE
LITERATURE IN PERFORMANCE
AT MARY BALDWIN COLLEGE IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH THE AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER

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“...Where have YOU been gadding?”

Claire Baker '07 was dramaturg for the ASC production *Love's Labour's Lost*, directed by MBC professor Dr. Jaq Bessell. She is pursuing an adjunct faculty position with Virginia colleges and theater internships while applying to PhD programs.

Jeremy Fiebig '07 is in a tenure-track position as assistant professor of theatre at Waldorf College in Forest City, IA. He will teach and direct two shows each year, starting with *Twelfth Night* and Sam Shepard's *True West*.

Heidi Grumelot '07 was assistant director and stage manager for ASC's summer productions of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Becky Kemper '07, co-founder of Maryland Shakespeare Festival, is producing artistic director of the Festival (www.mdshakes.org/index1.html).

Lesley Larson '07 performed this summer in two ASC productions: as Maria in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and as Dion, Emilia, and Dorcas in *The Winter's Tale*.

Katherine Mayberry '07 is a founding member of Pigeon Creek Shakespeare Company (www.pcsbakespeare.com) in Grand Haven, MI, and is one of four artistic associates. The company performed *The Winter's Tale* in several Michigan venues before traveling to Lexington, VA's Theatre at Lime Kiln. Mayberry acted and served as production manager.

Rick Blunt '06 will appear on stage with four companies this year. He began last January with the Blackfriars Playhouse's Renaissance Season Company. Next came work with the sketch comedy troupe Hobo Junction, which performs at Chicago's Gorilla Tango Theater. (Blunt finds it amusing that his first out-of-Staunton offer came from a theater with "gorilla" in the title). Blunt was also cast as Jerry in Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* with Heritage Theater Company in Chicago. He will perform two shows, including *A Christmas Carol*, in schools around the US from October until Christmas with Hampstead Stage Company, based in New Hampshire.

Alex Carney '06 is a drama teacher at Patterson High School in Baltimore, MD. He directed *Macbeth* at the school — all 26 minutes of it! In the fall, Carney will study for a PhD in curriculum and instruction in speech and theater at the University of Maryland, while continuing to teach. This summer he directed *Angels in America, Part II: Perestroika* at Spotlighters Theatre in Baltimore.

Mary Coy '06 is stage manager and assistant director for ASC's summer/fall 2007 season productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Winter's Tale*.

Sarah Henley '06 is education program manager at ASC. This fall, Sarah teaches at James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance.

Mark Mannette '06 began a tenure-track position at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Fayetteville, NC.

Mary Beth Smith '06 will start her second year as an MFA directing candidate at NYC's New School University for Drama. She worked on a film and as dramaturg for

Romeo and Juliet and *Taming of the Shrew*.

Jenna Steigerwalt '06 is a PhD student at Arizona State University.

Megan McDonough '05 is associate education director for Maryland Shakespeare Festival in Frederick, MD.

Cathy Brookshire '04 is adjunct instructor of theatre and dance at University of South Carolina (USC), where she teaches beginning and intermediate Acting, Voice and Diction, and Introduction to Theatre. Her professional work for 2006-07 included portraying Mrs. Yang in *The Good Person of Setzuan*, directed by Romanian Beatrice Rancea for Theatre South Carolina, fight choreographer for USC's productions *The Pillouman* and *Twelfth Night*, movement coach for the USC opera program's production *Postcards From Morocco*, and the role of Pat in the USC media arts' film, *Hands of Time*.

Liz Fontenla '04 is finishing her MFA at Ohio University. She worked at The Contemporary American Theater Festival this summer.

Kris Ayers spent the summer at Theater at Monmouth in Maine, serving as assistant stage manager. The company produced six shows, including *Measure for Measure* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Patrick Bently interned with American Shakespeare Center (ASC), helping with several aspects of Young Company Theatre Camp (YCTC) and preparing the script, sides, and study material for the fall production of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* at Blackfriars Playhouse.

Andrew Blasenak assisted Colleen Kelly with fight direction and choreography at ASC. He also taught a stage combat workshop for Midsummer Day Camp participants. In addition, Blasenak played Antipholus (coin toss determined which twin) in the University Wits' summer production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Sarah Budge's internship with ASC included teaching acrobatics for YCTC and Midsummer Day Camp. She also served as assistant director and assistant stage manager for *Grease* at the Lexington, VA Summer Arts Fair.

Chelsea Collier interned in the education office at ASC. She assembled study guides and brochures, led Blackfriars tours, helped with YCTC, helped with workshops and demonstrations, and worked on scripts for the Renaissance Season. Collier also appeared as Angelo in the Wits' production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Caroline Gaddy worked with Pigeon Creek Shakespeare Company (www.pcsbakespeare.com) in New Haven, MI performing in *The Winter's Tale* and helping with public relations.

Anna Gonzalez was wardrobe supervisor at DeSales University's Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival. She helped build costumes for five productions: *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Amadeus*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Gonzalez also served as costume designer for the Wits' production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Eliza Hofman worked for the professional acting company of the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire in Manheim, where she performed in

abbreviated versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. She also participated in interactive improv shows with the audience. The Faire is open to the public on weekends until the end of October.

Bob Jones returned to University of Texas' Shakespeare at Winedale residency program, where he co-directed and acted in *Measure for Measure*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Richard II*. In addition to a summer repertory in Windale, the troupe also gave selected performances at Central Market in Austin, Greer Garson Theatre in Dallas, and Gray's Inn in London.

Sara Landis had a summer internship with ASC's YCTC, conducting Blackfriars tours and assisting the education department. Landis performed as Adriana in the Wits' production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Lauren Mignogno interned in the ASC education department working with YCTC and assisting with Renaissance Season scripts. Mignogno chaperoned YCTC trips to Blackfriars, served as Talk-Back emcee (leading conversations with

the young students about the shows), and was rehearsal tutor (offering line assistance during rehearsals).

James Mainard O'Connell returned to Peterborough Players in Peterborough, NH for his fifth summer. He played Hal in William Inge's *Picnic* and worked as assistant technical director. O'Connell is adjunct instructor at James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance.

Christine Parker interned with ASC as dramaturg for *Antony and Cleopatra*. She also acted in the Wits' production *The Comedy of Errors*.

Solomon Romney's summer internship with ASC involved working with YCTC and leading Blackfriars Playhouse tours.

Christina Sayer, 2006 MLitt alumni, will return to complete her MFA in dramaturgy. She works at the ASC box office and served as stage manager and prompter for ASC's 2007 Renaissance Season.

“[You] shall receive such
thanks as befits
A King’s remembrance.”

– *Hamlet* II.2

Mary Baldwin College has combined the academic and applied aspects of Shakespearean theatrical studies to offer a unique Master of Letters/Master of Fine Arts in Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature in Performance (MLitt/MFA) in partnership with the internationally acclaimed American Shakespeare Center and its authentically recreated Elizabethan theatre. This marriage of scholarship and stagecraft sets this program apart from other theatre graduate programs. Launched in fall 2001, the MLitt/MFA program attracts applicants from around the country and beyond. Please visit us at: www.mbc.edu/shakespeare/mlitt.

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Julie D. Fox, assistant director of operations, Mary Baldwin College,
Staunton, VA, 24401. For further information, please call 540-887-7237.

Keats’ Hands May Have Held Donated Books

Our sincere thanks to alum Charles Salembier, who earned his MFA from MBC in 2005, for his recent contribution of Nathan Drake’s 1817, two-volume work, *Shakespeare and His Times*. Not only are the volumes beautiful in themselves; they also represent perhaps the earliest scholarly attempt to cover Shakespeare’s career and background and have an important place in the history of Shakespeare scholarship.

Moreover, if the note inside the cover — that this particular set belonged to artist Benjamin Haydon — is indeed a fact, then these books have another kind of value. Haydon was an accomplished English painter of the Romantic period (his portrait of William Wordsworth is well known, and the life-mask he created of John Keats is in the National Portrait Gallery), and he was also a good friend of Keats.

Keats’s sonnet, “On First Looking Into Chapman’s Homer,” was written after reading the copy of Elizabethan playwright George Chapman’s translation of Homer’s works that he had borrowed from Haydon (Keats mentions this in a letter). Given Keats’s own immense interest in Shakespeare, and the always valuable, sometimes seminal, critical comments on Shakespeare that appear throughout his letters, it is not unreasonable to speculate that our books may once have been held by Keats himself. Now, there’s a thought.

— DR. FRANK SOUTHERINGTON,
MBC PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
AND FORMER DIRECTOR OF MLitt/MFA