

THE ROUGHIAN



(Still just barely) Spring 2009

A Quarterly Newsletter of Theater in the Rough

SEASON 2009-10

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)

by Adam Long, Daniel Singer & Jess Winfield

Laugh-Till-Your-Face-Hurts Comedy

Back by popular demand! This legendary adaptation, in which every single play of the bard's is presented, that is, at least, well, mentioned, in less than two hours, is fast paced and alarmingly funny.

Beginning with a two-man version of Romeo & Juliet (to quote the Bard, "One man in his time plays many parts...") and ending with Hamlet performed four times in a row (the final rendition performed backwards in less than a minute), the show rebounds between moments of deep beauty and abject silliness. Titus Andronicus is done as a cooking show (ah, but which cooking show...), the Histories are a foot ball game with a crown instead of a ball, the comedies are lumped together and performed by puppets, puppets, puppets and Othello is an inspired musical number which must be seen to be believed.

Co-artistic director Katie first read this play out-loud to co-artistic director Aaron while driving in America, north on Interstate 5. They were forced (this is absolutely true) to pull off the road at one point so they could stop laughing, dry their eyes and pull themselves together enough to drive safely.

Since the last production in Spring, 2003, many people have said how much they enjoyed it. Performers Ed Christian, Aaron Elmore and Donny Gott will return to update and remount the piece this October.

In addition, *Complete Works* will kick off with our Fall fund raiser for the New Home Fund (see article at right). It will be an art auction and soirée which culminates in our opening night performance.

THE TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CAESAR

by William Shakespeare

Forget-What-You-Thought-You-Learned-in-High-School Drama

Seriously. Thousands have read this play in high school because, well, they were forced to. Teacher's, with the best intentions, often teach *Caesar* because it is, a) short, b) has some famous names, c) has some of the cannon's simplest, least Elizabethan language (fewer "thees" and "thous" per page) and, honestly, d) has almost no sex. Despite these points and the best intentions, almost every high school student who reads it thinks that *Caesar* is a dull play populated by talking statues and that Shakespeare is out-dated and hard to understand.

Surely, what Shakespeare is, rather, is a playwright who is better watched than read.

What *Caesar* is, what's more, is a stunning pageant of a worldly, urbane, and darkly religious people. It's got action, suspense, battles and true love. It is the story of amazing men and women who, with the best intentions, commit horrible crimes. Whether they aspire to be worshiped as gods, plot treason, assassinate trusting friends or start civil war, they do the wrong thing for the right reason.

Although the Rough has yet to do a Roman Play, Shakespeare wrote several. Stories of Rome were as popular in his day as Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* and HBO's *Rome* show them to be in our own. To bring this incredible play to life, our production will augment the spoken word with dance, mask and (for us) an elaborate set with costumes that are rich and evocative (for more on the costumes see "Be-Wear the Ides of March" on page 2).

CURRENT BALANCE: \$23,400

ADDITIONAL PLEDGES: \$35,200

CASH & PLEDGES TO DATE: \$58,600

OUR GOAL: \$100,000

NEW HOME UPDATE

Started in October of 2008 with the intent of gathering \$100,000 by the Winter of 2011, the New Home Fund now stands just shy of a quarter of our goal in hand and well past 50% of our final goal with a year and a half to go. This is tremendous. 90% of these donations, large and small, are from you.

Three cheers, must be given to our Treasurer, Peter Freer, who predicted we could make \$4000 during the run of *Shrew* by doing Curtain Raiser speeches. And we did!

Three more cheers to philanthropist Simone Machamer who just pledged \$6000 to the Fund. Many thanks to Ken Leghorn of the Juneau Community Foundation for making introductions and to Father George Silides of Holy Trinity for happening to be on site with a key so she could see the actual McPhetres. She was very enthusiastic, obviously and it was her pledge which put us well past the halfway point.

KNOW ANOTHER ROUGHIAN?

If you know someone else who would like The Roughian, send us their address or email to: theatreintherough@gmail.com

SARI I ASKED

We can always use saris. Drape them, bead them, wear them. If you or someone you know has a silk sari (or two, or twenty) to donate or sell to Theatre in the Rough, call Aaron at 209-0867 for more information.

FROM THE SKETCHBOOK

Most people we talk to find our costumes a highlight. Our costume stock is admired for its quality, variety and period richness. Most of our clothes are very well made but their period look and variety are, well, illusions.

We love the romance and pageantry of period clothes, but no single piece in our stock is strictly period, and for good reasons.

1) Period clothes are extremely time consuming to make. We need to spend some time rehearsing.

2) Period clothes are made to fit one person. Since we use them over, we need our pieces to fit as many people as possible.

3) Period clothes are hard to wear. We need to be able to move more freely and to be able to change backstage, often rapidly, often unassisted, often in low light.

4) Period clothes are, frankly, not always that flattering to wear. Men in the English Renaissance fancied themselves with big hips and narrow shoulders and women looked like they were made from wood.

So we choose the period elements we like and make them work for us. In the end, whatever their period of origin, all the pieces must harmonize with each other, enhance the story and illuminate the characters.

The result of this priority is that our costume stock is less a collection of left-overs from different shows and (though often for 12 people at a time) more like a harmonious and varied single wardrobe: it's got lots of hard wearing neutrals, a range of formal wear, some work clothes, and a few signature pieces. And some rags. We do have a lot of tall black boots and not much else for feet. Everyone's wardrobe has its limitations.

As with most classical stocks, pieces are often made for nobles and kings which later get hand-me-downed to the lower classes as they wear out. We have some things that will be hard to use again. Four Musketeer uniforms. A ragged leather coat made from an 18' python skin. Most everything else, however, could be or has been used in more than one show and some get used all the time. Most of our ethnic-cut trousers (for their deep rise and baggy appearance they are known affectionately as "poopy pants") have been in every show since they were made. Even some of our more slap-dash, thrown-together pieces (and, O, we have them...) get used again and again. This one black gown comes to mind. Slimy fabric, chunky cut. Yet it works.

So if you notice the same coats and dresses coming back show after show, if you notice a lot of period details but no actual period pieces, now you know why and hopefully you enjoy it.

If you never noticed, it just means the illusion is working.

This page shows thumbnails which helped visualize the costume design for The Taming of The Shrew. The pieces pictured are mostly pulled items from past shows. The coat on Katherina (top left) and the doublet on Grumio (top right) were new pieces, the first a donation, the other something originally cut for Three Musketeers and finally finished for Shrew. These thumbnails are not always accurate. Bianca's dress (bottom center) eventually had sleeves that were more droopy than puffy but they worked well. They were made from left-over fabric to

match a dress from The Tempest.

BE-WEAR THE IDES OF MARCH

Costume Design for *Julius Caesar*

Interest is already brewing about what *Julius Caesar* will look like. As usual, our production will not be truly period but will be true to the world of the play. While the design is still in its early stages, the big ideas are shaping nicely. This particular costume design hinges on one important and thorny aspect of telling this particular story. According to the title, this is Caesar's tragedy, yet he dies a third of the way through. How to keep the tragedy alive?

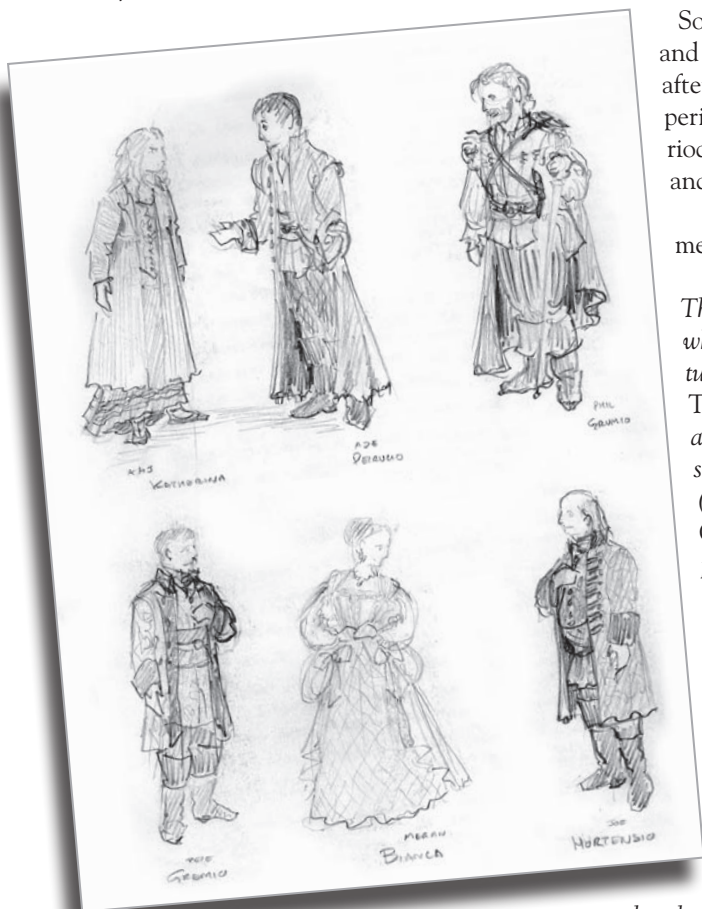
Although he later appears as a ghost (probably his empty armor turned into a puppet) and he is spoken of constantly, we have found that visual elements can help the audience keep track of the story. These ever-present visual cues can underscore an abstract idea like tragedy. So, after Caesar dies, everyone will dress in mournful black. Even the conspirators who killed him. Especially them.

The opening scenes of the play then will be light and bright. Party clothes. Caesar's Triumph was more than a celebration of his recent victory (a dubious thing to celebrate as it was a victory over his fellow Roman rivals). The Triumph at the beginning of *Caesar* is a combination of a city-wide parade, Summer Olympics and revival meeting. The religious aspect is critical to our understanding. Caesar not only puts himself forward as a king by right of conquest, a dictator, a tyrant, but he has his image placed on all the alters and shrines in the city. Two men who speak against it are killed. He is not just saying he is a supreme ruler but a supreme being, a god. His wardrobe will reflect this ambition. Whatever his subjects and friends are dressed in, he will have only more so.

The end of the show is dominated by the civil war that results from Caesar's death. While the generals may have their own personal standards (such as a bull, a heron, a sphinx), in this civil war, all the soldiers are dressed alike. And a mournful black will continue to predominate.

The other element that is a concern at this early stage is blood. Blood is everywhere in this play: Roman blood in their veins, on their hands, on their swords, on Caesars clothes. Liquid blood, however, gets everywhere. Even made from liquid detergent, it is a sticky, staining, maintenance night-

(continued on back page)



FROM THE BOARDS

TR Board Members and The Stage

While every actor has a life-list of desired roles, Christopher Sly was never on mine. However, the offer to play him came with the proposal that I should direct the play he watches called *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Since the so-called Induction is often cut, Sly is at least a somewhat rare role, and seemed doable for me as director since the character is largely uninvolved with the action on stage and has a front row seat. When either Katie or Aaron direct, they usually take a small role as well. They provide an outside eye for each other on scenes where the director is acting. This time, I would direct them in *Taming* and Aaron would direct me in the Induction.

We then began to dig into the script. As with every TR production we planned a cutting of the text that would suit our ideas about casting, pace and tone. Who would be in it? How does the story get told? What does the piece say?

Long before we started rehearsals, a number of people asked me about Katharina's ending monologue. With its language of patriarchy and submission it is considered by some to be a problem that must be solved. A 1976 commedia-style production emphasized the farcical elements throughout to trivialize the ending. In the 1929 movie, Kate delivers her monologue with a wink and a nod, hinting that she doesn't really mean it. In a 1978 London production she was full of suppressed resistance and anger with her lot in life.

Director Daniela Varon was quoted in the January 2009 issue of *American Theatre*: "In the context of when it was written, it's not a play written by a misogynist – it's written by a man who has an extraordinarily humane vision of how to tame a shrew, compared with the shrew legends that abounded at the time, where women who spoke up or were considered scolds or nags were treated with unbelievable physical brutality." However, some scholars question whether the monologue was really a comfortable fit with the Elizabethans. The argument goes that around 1611 John Fletcher wrote an adaptation called *The Woman's Price or The Tamer Tamed* in which Petruchio later remarries and is subjected to a similar treatment as he visited on Katharina. The production was reported to be as popular as *Shrew* by the mid-1600's and is cited as evidence of a discomfort with the play by Shakespeare's contemporaries.

Such academic musings quickly dissolved in the day-to-day of rehearsal and the moment-to-moment lives of the characters. A further reality check was brought on by the crush of logistics involved in getting the right subset of a dozen cast members in the room at the same time to rehearse a particular scene. We were not fully cast when rehearsal began, and a couple of actors changed roles as the play evolved. For the first four weeks, I did not stage a single night without someone standing in for someone who wasn't there.

In the end, we asked Patricia Hull (a long time Roughian but first timer to Shakespeare) to cover a number of roles. Part of the plot involves Biondello finding someone to impersonate his master Lucentio's father: to save finding another actor, we had the character of Biondello play the role himself. The last role cast was Lucentio's actual father, Vincentio, who appears on stage very late. After pleading with every actor we could think of, by about two weeks in, it was clear the only available actor was me. Sly would have to disappear at some point. We were bending the play to our circumstances, but whatever liberties we took were in the same spirit, I hoped, that led Shakespeare to shape his work to his own company of actors.

As the show developed, we tried always to stay true to the story and the characters as we met them on the page. We highlighted Petruchio's dire financial circumstance, but tried to show his evolving regard for Katharina as transcending any initial pecuniary impulse; he starts as a money grubber but ends up a true husband. Kate accepts

Petruchio as the first potential suitor that she finds interesting. His wit matches hers and they share a disregard for convention. She finds him as challenging as he finds her. As the play begins, neither Katharina nor Petruchio is able to function in society. As they learn to live with each other, they also find a way to live in the world and still stay true to each other and to themselves. In the famous speech, she adopts the vernacular of patriarchy acceptable in her world, while he

moves toward kindness and acceptance that money isn't everything. Her capitulation on the road ("...it is the blessed moon") is not forced but to me shows her intent to make the marriage work in spite of the world outside. We tried to show Petruchio's similar intent.

In the play as written, after the Induction and some minor banter near the beginning, Sly disappears. One source for Shakespeare's play was probably a 1594 work called *The Taming of A Shrew* in which Sly has much more to say, and there was a temptation to borrow from the earlier work in order to complete the arc of Sly's character. *A Shrew*, however, is pretty inferior to *The Shrew*. Aaron really wanted to have Sly come back in the end though. Katie suggested a sonnet (below) about the "marriage of true minds" that reminded us all of Kate and Petruchio. Put in Sly's mouth, we were able to supply an ending for a character often omitted entirely.

Ed Christian has been directing theatre since 2009. He is a long-time Juneau actor, often cast as a drunk, and sits on the Theatre in the Rough board.

...
**academic
musings
quickly
dissolved in
the day-
to-day of
rehearsal**
...

Sonnet 116

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height
be taken.
Love's not times fool, though rosy lips
and cheeks
Within his bending sickles compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and days
But bears it out, even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.*

Reflections from Aaron

true: Meaning both genuine and constant.
ever fixed mark: The North Star, which does not move no matter how dark the night or how rough the weather.
worth's unknown... height be taken: We don't know how precious such constancy is, though we may steer by it every day. A star's height above the horizon tells ship's navigators (and true minds) where they are.
bending: Sickles are bent and the sickle of time also bends us to the earth.
compass: as in encompass. Time is hard on our looks. Compasses are also used in navigation. Time tells us where we are.
I never writ: Then I am not a writer (even of this sonnet).

BE-WEAR

(continued from page 2)

mare for a theatre our size with no wardrobe crew and no washer and dryer. The stronger choice for us is the Kabuki technique of using red silk to represent the blood. In addition to being tidy, it lets the audience concentrate on the play. Both liquid and silk blood are just conventions which the audience must accept. We find, when swaths of red silk appear, the audience will make the leap. "O, that's supposed to be blood." With liquid blood, it's often a step back. "Wow, that's really fake."


Further, the conspirators must ritualistically besmear their swords and dip their hands ("up to the elbows") in Caesar's blood in an attempt to make his death seem less an act of treason and butchery and more a noble and sacred sacrifice. This act marks them for life and by using red silk they can remain marked this way for the rest of the evening by simply wrapping their weapons and their forearms in the fabric. This helps us remember what they did and keeps Caesar and his tragic death in our minds.

Without staining every costume in sight.

TR THEATRE IN THE ROUGH

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)


by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield



Oct. 2 to Nov. 1, 2009 @
Alaska Territorial Hall

TR THEATRE IN THE ROUGH

THE TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CAESAR



by William Shakespeare
Feb. 19 to Mar. 14, 2010 @
Alaska Territorial Hall



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