

Teaching Kids Shakespeare

AACTFest 2015 WORKSHOP

**WORKSHOP PRESENTER: Robert Picklesimer, The Creative Dramatics Workshop
(Has directed over 20 Shakespeare Productions, and acted in over 40)**

Directed: Romeo and Juliet, Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, The Tempest, Hamlet, King Lear, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It, Othello, Macbeth. Acting: Lear, Prospero, Oberon, Bottom, Claudius, Duncan, Capulet, Henry in "Lion in Winter," Sir Anthony Absolute in "The Rivals," Vershinin in "Three Sisters," among others.

- I. The very first thing to deal with in working with Shakespeare is to get rid of our own trepidations. We have to be a little callous with Shakespeare, and treat his works as working acting scripts, not on a pedestal. We have to not be intimidated by Shakespeare. All of the tools of language, scansion, period, scene changes, we have to treat as our friends, and not as our enemy.
 - II. All Act Breaks, and even punctuation, written into any text of Shakespeare were artificially added by later editors, and were not prescribed by Shakespeare at all. In fact no one knows for sure what his opinion is of anything, because every statement he makes is through a character. (Polonius in "Hamlet")
 - III. Oxford University Press or www.OpenSourceShakespeare.com, the best free site for Shakespeare, All excerpts used here are from the Open Source free use website. The "ed" versus the " 'd"
- Example: Romeo is banished*
- IV. Cutting Scenes in Shakespeare. The greatest sacrilege of all to modern theatricians, who so highly respect the scripts of their playwrights. But our scripts of Shakespeare may never be complete, anyway. Throw away jokes that don't work, characters that are unnecessary, lines that are too flowery, extensive and ornate. That is what all the Shakespearian companies do. I have seen nearly half of "Othello" cut out, the peace between Capulet and Montague cut out of "R&J," the long speech by Touchstone in "As You Like It," and multiple other long stretches cut. Of course I made the error of keeping all of "Lear." *Examples: Romeo's first speech, Theseus about Bottom*
 - V. Using teens in "R&J" and "MSND." Using very young performers as servants. Combining parts. *Examples: Opening of "R&J", Potpan, Peter and Musicians, Capulet's letter*
 - VI. Pronouns and Punctuation. No repetition. *Beginning of Midsummer Night's Dream, Juliet*
 - VII. Reactions, "MSND" play within a play, fetching Puck. *Titania's speech, Play within a play*
 - VIII. Thee/thou/you/we. *Examples: "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Henry IV, p.1"*
 - IX. Scansion is your friend (Oxford Univ. Press), but if you miss it, who cares? *MSND, R&J*
 - X. Subtext. In England they learn Shakespeare and Chekhov. *Example: Marc Antony*
 - XI. Costumes and props, modern, toy weapons, fencing foils cheap (need a good fight trainer)
 - XII. Selection of Shows. Process of developing young actors at CDW.

A. Preferred for Younger Casts

1. Romeo and Juliet, or West Side Story, a whole host of teens, and younger servants
2. Midsummer Night's Dream, younger fairies and a Puck, teen lovers, younger Mechanicals
3. As You Like It. A girl playing a boy playing a girl
4. Much Ado About Nothing, three sets of young lovers
5. Twelfth Night, multiple young lovers, a brother and sister mistaken for each other
6. Comedy of Errors, two sets of young twins
7. Hamlet, with only a few older people, can be a surprisingly youthful cast

B. Can be done with a few qualified oldsters

1. The Tempest, lots of young people and spirits
2. Taming of the Shrew, mostly young people,
3. Henry IV, parts 1 and 2, and Henry V. If you have an older King and Falstaff

C. Plays probably wouldn't do with kids, Merchant of Venice, Titus Andronicus, the Histories

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

Romeo. There is no world without Verona walls,
But purgatory, torture, hell itself.
Hence-banished is banish'd from the world, 1890
And world's exile is death: then banished,
Is death mis-term'd: calling death banishment,
Thou cutt'st my head off with a golden axe,
And smilest upon the stroke that murders me

Romeo. Why, such is love's transgression.
Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
Which thou wilt propagate, to have it prest
With more of thine: this love that thou hast shown 215
Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.
Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Being vex'd a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears:
What is it else? a madness most discreet, 220
A choking gall and a preserving sweet.
Farewell, my coz.

- **First Servant.** Where's Potpan, that he helps not to take away? He shift a trencher?
he scrape a trencher! 620
- **Second Servant.** When good manners shall lie all in one or two men's hands and
they unwashed too, 'tis a foul thing.
- **First Servant.** Away with the joint-stools, remove the
court-cupboard, look to the plate. Good thou, save
me a piece of marchpane; and, as thou lovest me, let 625
the porter let in Susan Grindstone and Nell.
Antony, and Potpan!
- **Second Servant.** Ay, boy, ready.
- **First Servant.** You are looked for and called for, asked for and sought for, in the
great chamber. 630
- **Second Servant.** We cannot be here and there too. Cheerly, boys; be brisk awhile,
and the longer liver take

- **Capulet.** Now, fellow, What's there?
- **First Servant.** Things for the cook, sir; but I know not what.
- **Capulet.** Make haste, make haste.
[Exit First Servant]
Sirrah, fetch drier logs: 2635
Call Peter, he will show thee where they are.
- **Second Servant.** I have a head, sir, that will find out logs,
And never trouble Peter for the matter.

[Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, of the house of Capulet, armed with swords and bucklers]

- **Sampson.** Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals. **Gregory.** No, for then we should be colliers.
- **Sampson.** I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw. **Gregory.** Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar. 20
- **Sampson.** I strike quickly, being moved.
- **Gregory.** But thou art not quickly moved to strike. **Sampson.** A dog of the house of Montague moves me. **Gregory.** To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand: therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.
- **Sampson.** A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's. **Gregory.** That shows thee a weak slave; for the weaker goes to the wall.
- **Sampson.** True; and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.
- **Gregory.** The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.
- **Sampson.** 'Tis all one, I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the mer I will be cruel with the maids, and cut off their heads.
- **Gregory.** The heads of the maids?
- **Sampson.** Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads; take it in what sense thou wilt. 40
- **Gregory.** They must take it in sense that feel it. **Sampson.** Me they shall feel while am able to stand: and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.
- **Gregory.** 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor John. Draw thy tool! here comes 45 two of the house of the Montagues.
- **Sampson.** My naked weapon is out: quarrel, I will back thee.
- **Gregory.** How! turn thy back and run?
- **Sampson.** Fear me not.
- **Gregory.** No, marry; I fear thee! 50
- **Sampson.** Let us take the law of our sides; let them begin. **Gregory.** I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.
- **Sampson.** Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them; which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it. 55
- *[Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR]*
- **Abraham.** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
- **Sampson.** I do bite my thumb, sir.
- **Abraham.** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

- **Sampson.** *[Aside to GREGORY]* Is the law of our side, if I say ay?
- **Gregory.** No.
- **Sampson.** No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.
- **Gregory.** Do you quarrel, sir? 65
- **Abraham.** Quarrel sir! no, sir.
- **Sampson.** If you do, sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you.
- **Abraham.** No better.
- **Sampson.** Well, sir. **Gregory.** Say 'better:' here comes one of my master's kinsmer
- **Sampson.** Yes, better, sir. **Abraham.** You lie.
- **Sampson.** Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy swashing blow.

- **Romeo.** He jests at scars that never felt a wound. 845
[JULIET appears above at a window]
 But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
 It is my lady, O, it is my love! 855
 O, that she knew she were!
 She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?

Juliet. O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? 880
 Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
 Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
 And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

- **Egeus.** Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!
- **Theseus.** Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?
Egeus. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
 Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
 Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
 This man hath my consent to marry her.
 Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke, 30
 This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child;
 Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
 And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
 Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
 With feigning voice verses of feigning love, 35
 And stolen the impression of her fantasy
 With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
 Knacks, trifles, nose-gays, sweetmeats, messengers
 Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth:
 With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart, 40
 Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,

To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she; will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens, **45**
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case

Titania. These are the forgeries of jealousy: **450**
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind, **455**
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud **460**
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drowned field, **465**
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter here; **470**
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see **475**
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Far in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer, **480**
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension; **485**
We are their parents and original.

- **Bottom.** O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame 2135
That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd with cheer.
Come, tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus; 2140
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop:
[Stabs himself]
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead, 2145
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light;
Moon take thy flight:
[Exit Moonshine] 2150
Now die, die, die, die, die.
- **Demetrius.** No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.
- **Lysander.** Less than an ace, man; for he is dead; he is nothing.
- **Theseus.** With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Two Gentlemen of Verona

- **Second Outlaw.** Indeed, because you are a banish'd man, Therefore, above the rest we parley to you:
Are you content to be our general?
To make a virtue of necessity
And live, as we do, in this wilderness? 1615
- **Third Outlaw.** What say'st thou? wilt thou be of our consort?
Say ay, and be the captain of us all:
We'll do thee homage and be ruled by thee,
Love thee as our commander and our king.
- **First Outlaw.** But if thou scorn our courtesy, thou diest.
- **Second Outlaw.** Thou shalt not live to brag what we have offer'd.
- **Valentine.** I take your offer and will live with you,
Provided that you do no outrages
On silly women or poor passengers.
- **Third Outlaw.** No, we detest such vile base practises. 1625
Come, go with us, we'll bring thee to our crews,
And show thee all the treasure we have got,
Which, with ourselves, all rest at thy dispose. [Exeunt]

Henry IV, Part 1

- **Lady Percy.** But hear you, my lord.
- **Hotspur (Henry Percy).** What say'st thou, my lady?
- **Lady Percy.** What is it carries you away?
- **Hotspur (Henry Percy).** Why, my horse, my love, my horse.
- **Lady Percy.** Out, you mad-headed ape!
- A weasel hath not such a deal of spleen
As you are toss'd with. In faith,
I'll know your business, Harry, that I will.
I fear my brother Mortimer doth stir
About his title, and hath sent for you **945**
To line his enterprise: but if you go,—
- **Hotspur (Henry Percy).** So far afoot, I shall be weary, love.
- **Lady Percy.** Come, come, you paraquito, answer me
Directly unto this question that I ask:
In faith, I'll break thy little finger, Harry, **950**
An if thou wilt not tell me all things true.
- **Hotspur (Henry Percy).** Away,
Away, you trifler! Love! I love thee not,
I care not for thee, Kate: this is no world
To play with mammets and to tilt with lips: **955**
We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns,
And pass them current too. God's me, my horse!
What say'st thou, Kate? what would'st thou have with me?
- **Lady Percy.** Do you not love me? do you not, indeed? **960**
Well, do not then; for since you love me not,
I will not love myself. Do you not love me?
Nay, tell me if you speak in jest or no.
- **Hotspur (Henry Percy).** Come, wilt thou see me ride?
And when I am on horseback, I will swear **965**
I love thee infinitely. But hark you, Kate;
I must not have you henceforth question me
Whither I go, nor reason whereabouts:
Whither I must, I must; and, to conclude,
This evening must I leave you, gentle Kate. **970**
I know you wise, but yet no farther wise
Than Harry Percy's wife: constant you are,
But yet a woman: and for secrecy,
No lady closer; for I well believe
Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know; **975**
And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate.
- **Lady Percy.** How! so far?
- **Hotspur (Henry Percy).** Not an inch further. But hark you, Kate:
Whither I go, thither shall you go too; To-day will I set forth, to-morrow you. **980**
Will this content you, Kate?
- **Lady Percy.** It must of force.