

## OKLAHOMA!

### Legendary Musical Sparked a Revolution

By Dennis Razze

**O***klahoma!* changed the landscape of musical theatre like the plow transformed the prairie. As the first collaboration of Broadway legends Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *Oklahoma!* is often credited with many other “firsts”—the first musical to fully integrate music, lyrics, and story, the first to use dance to tell a dramatic story, the first to include a dream ballet, and the first to have real characters who were psychologically motivated and sang because their feelings moved them to a more poetic plane of communication.

In truth, Hammerstein and Jerome Kern’s 1927 musical—*Showboat*—had achieved similar advances in writing, style, and composition. Several other musicals also used dance in innovative and dramatic ways, such as *Lady in the Dark* and *On Your Toes*. But *Oklahoma!*, which premiered on March 31, 1943, and ran for 2,243 performances over five years (a record not broken until *My Fair Lady* in 1956) united all of these innovations in musical theatre in one show. With well-drawn characters, linear plot structure, and perfectly integrated songs and dances, it became the model for the American “book musical.”

Opening during World War II, *Oklahoma!* was greeted by an audience eager to celebrate both the pioneering spirit of characters building new lives on the frontier and the patriotism surrounding the territory’s impending statehood. More interesting, perhaps, is the fact that *Oklahoma!* continues not only to speak to American audiences but to audiences worldwide. Its freshness and exuberance are manifest in the 1955 Hollywood film as well as many successful revivals on Broadway and in London, Canada, Japan, and many other countries.

The inception of this ground-breaking musical originated with the 1931 play by Lynn Riggs, called *Green Grow the Lilacs*. The play’s title came from a folk song of the same name that is sung in the play. The play included four folk songs sung by the popular Tex Ritter, who also understudied the role of Curly. Ten years later, a Dallas summer stock production of the play used more folk songs as well as square dances to tell the story of the pioneers who settled the Oklahoma Territory, and the production inspired the Theatre Guild to approach Rodgers and Lorenz Hart to write a musical based on Riggs’ play.

*continues on page 3*

## Notes from the Producing Artistic Director

If you're enchanted by a certain show set in an English castle, perhaps part of the attraction is going inside: a beautiful castle, beautiful yet complicated and fragile lives, and a mesmerizing world from another time.



Patrick Mulcahy

Theatre allows us to live twice. Here at the Festival, you can live many lives: yours and the life of a famous English king, a novice nun in Vienna, an Oklahoma cowhand, a Victorian matriarch, a spy novel hero on the run, all in the same summer season. You get to go inside.

Shakespeare's plays and other world classics invite us in, too; inside ourselves, into a world of ideas that fascinates, inside a kaleidoscopic humanity that makes room for us. When we go in search of penetrating insights translated into poignant and elevating experiences, Shakespeare is our man and his canon has even more rooms than Highclere Castle.

This season brings the rare opportunity to see two more of Shakespeare's captivating works, *Henry VIII* and *Measure for Measure*, in which rival thirsts for power and belonging become spellbindingly entwined.

*Oklahoma!* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* provide pure delight and refreshing escape to entrancing environs, while the quick-change comedy *The 39 Steps* has laugh-riot imaginative fun with genres known for taking themselves fairly seriously: spy novels and Hitchcock films.

Where else can you go inside and spend your time with Shakespeare, Wilde, Hitchcock, and Rodgers and Hammerstein.

Join us, and "ascend the brightest heaven of invention" with family and friends this summer at PSF. A season of life memories awaits you here: inside.

Patrick Mulcahy

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Rodgers and Hart, perhaps the greatest songwriting team of the era, had collaborated on many musicals, including *Babes in Arms*, *The Boys from Syracuse*, and *Pal Joey*. Hart—who struggled with alcoholism and depression—preferred more urbane subjects than a musical about cowboys, eventually bowed out, took a vacation to Mexico, and gave his blessing for Rodgers to choose Hammerstein as his lyricist and book writer. Hammerstein was anxious to work with Rodgers because their styles were complementary—Hammerstein preferred to write the lyrics first, and Rodgers liked to set an already composed lyric to music.

The musical's characters, plot, and much of the dialogue were drawn scrupulously from Riggs' play, though Hammerstein added the characters and subplots of Will Parker and Ado Annie, which provided comic relief to the dramatic story, and the villain Jeeter became Judd Frye.

Rather than opening the show with a big chorus number as was the usual practice, *Oklahoma!* began with a lone cowboy strolling onstage singing "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning!" with no orchestral accompaniment until later in the song. The first act ended with a 15 minute "dream ballet" conceived by the great ballet choreographer Agnes de Mille, who used the sequence as a way to embody the heroine's fears and foreshadow the end of the play.

The show previewed in Boston and New Haven, Conn., and unusually, few changes were made. But there was one addition—the show-stopping musical number "Oklahoma!" which also retired the show's previous title, *Away We Go!*.

Hart, who sat in the second row for the New York opening, "pushed his way through the crowd at the after-show party in Sardi's restaurant and threw his arms around his ex-partner, grinning from ear to ear. He told Rodgers he had never had a better evening at the theater in his life."<sup>1</sup>

Producer Mike Todd walked out after the first act during previews and wisecracked: "No legs, no jokes, no chance." Of course, Todd was wrong and the show went on to create Broadway history and began the greatest partnership in the history of musical theatre—Rodgers and Hammerstein. There were no Tony Awards at the time—they didn't exist until 1947—but critics raved and the show won the Pulitzer Prize.

I'm working with a fantastic team of collaborators on PSF's production of this wonderful musical. New to PSF is Broadway designer Michael McDonald, Tony nominee for his costumes for *Hair*; also new is David P. Gordon, who is designing the scenery. A professor of design at Rutgers University, he has won multiple Barrymore Awards. Eric T. Haugen, the fantastic lighting designer who has designed so many of PSF's musicals, including last year's *Sweeney Todd*, is returning.

Longtime collaborator Stephen Casey is creating the many dances in *Oklahoma!*, including the challenging dream ballet. In this production, the actors will dance the principal ballet—there will not be a "dream Laurey" or "dream Curly" stepping in. DeSales alumna Christine Negherbon will play Laurey, and an amazing new young baritone Doug Carpenter will fill the boots of cowboy Curley.

For this production, we're recreating the rustic and rugged look and feel of the inhabitants of the Oklahoma Territory in 1905, and the scenic design will capture the sweep and power of the landscape of the Indian territory of the time.

Don't miss PSF's magnificent production of one of Rodgers and Hammerstein's best and one of the all-time great Broadway musicals—*Oklahoma!* ■

Editor's Note: Dennis Razze is PSF's associate artistic director and director of theatre for DeSales University. DSU theatre major Marc Bitler contributed to this article.

<sup>1</sup> Nolan, Frederick. *The Sound of Their Music: The Story of Rodgers and Hammerstein*.



Christine Negherbon, Laurey



Doug Carpenter, Curley

## Dancing on the Prairie

By Marc Bitler

The pioneering American ballet *Rodeo* created a national sensation. Scored by the legendary Aaron Copland, the ballet dramatized wranglers and cowboys and elevated choreographer Agnes de Mille to artistic prominence, leading Rodgers and Hammerstein to invite her to choreograph *Oklahoma!*

Primarily a classical ballerina and choreographer, de Mille also had a great interest in acting and theatre. Her *Rodeo* combined the exuberance of musical theatre with the discipline of classical ballet and is now considered one of the earliest examples of distinctly American ballet—although it was created on the Russian dancers of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

As de Mille prepared to go on tour with Ballet Russe, she packed a blank copybook with pages titled "Ballet," "Many a New Day," "Cowman and the Farmer," and "Kansas City," so she could make notes and be prepared when rehearsals for *Oklahoma!* began.

"De Mille was influenced by poetry, literature, story telling, personal relationships, and psychology," says Stephen Casey,

choreographer for PSF's production. "She made the choreography both highly artistic and commercially appealing.

"When *Oklahoma!* was created, all the 'names' in dance from that time period—de Mille, George Balanchine, Martha Graham, and Gene Kelly—were seeking the same thing: an American form of dance, an American style, an American way of moving. All of them succeeded in doing just that."

*Oklahoma!* includes the iconic "dream ballet," which revealed the psychological struggles of the characters. "Each dancer was part of the storytelling, an individual character that had a through line from the beginning to the end of the musical; this was not a chorus of dancers," Casey says.

"The key is to not copy de Mille, but to honor her and stay true to why these people are dancing in the first place," Casey says. "What motivates the dance? We want to respect and pay homage to the source material."

"The dance vocabulary must look like it comes from the proper time period. It needs to be reflective of the play itself." ■



JOHN  
BUCHAN'S  
**THE**

# WHERE HITCHCO

By Peter E. Danelski

**T**he slogan for *The 39 Steps* succinctly proclaims “where Hitchcock meets hilarious,” and Patrick Barlow’s play lives up to the promise. The comic espionage pastiche draws its plot primarily from the 1935 Alfred Hitchcock film of the same name. The protagonist, one Richard Hannay, begins the story bemoaning his mid-life funk when he catches the eye of a mysterious woman at the theatre and is immediately swept into an international military-fueled chase—with his life on the line.

Throughout the hunt, Hannay is chased by train, plane, and foot; forcing him into disguises and eventually leading him to love. The story culminates in Hannay’s effort to clear his name and, simultaneously, pull Britain back from the brink of war.

Hannay’s saga didn’t start with Hitchcock. Hitchcock based his film on John Buchan’s 1915 spy “shocker” novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Barlow’s play, a wild, quick-change comedy, is inspired by both. Buchan, whose many real careers would rival the double lives of even the most skilled secret agents, was well known in his time. At the height of his popularity, after being appointed Governor General of Canada in 1935, he was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine (coincidentally, the same year the Hitchcock film premiered). A close look at the themes and characters in *The 39 Steps* reveals surprising similarities to Buchan’s own colorful life.

Spy novels were just one area of Buchan’s expertise. His work includes a four-volume history of World War I; biographies of Julius Caesar, Sir Walter Scott and Oliver Cromwell; and a textbook for accountants, along with numerous essay and poetry collections.<sup>1</sup>

## A LOVE LETTER TO THE MAGIC OF THEATRE: A LA AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

*The 39 Steps* adds a splash of Monty Python to the madcap story of espionage and murder. Four actors take on 150 characters to tell one unforgettable story. Here’s a sample:

HANNAY: Beautiful mysterious woman pursued by gunmen. Sounds like a spy story.

ANNABELLA: That’s exactly what it is. Only I prefer the word “agent” better.

HANNAY: ‘Secret agent’ I suppose? For which country?

ANNABELLA: I have no country.

HANNAY: Born in a balloon, eh?



Hannay\*



Steve Burns  
Clown 1



Anthony Reimer  
Clown 2



Genevieve Perrier  
Woman

\*Christopher Patrick Mullen will perform in the PSF production of *Henry VIII* this summer and not in *The 39 Steps*, as previously announced.

## THESE TWO MEN COMMON THAN I

*“The incidents are  
probability, and  
just inside the  
of the possi*

– John Buchan  
The 1915 dedication  
to *The Thirty-Nine*

# CK MEETS HILARIOUS

Still, his most innovative literary contribution remains his espionage fiction—a genre he is credited with having a major hand in shaping. He came by his research honestly: during WWI, Buchan served as lieutenant colonel for the British army in France and was later made director of information as well as director of intelligence. Throughout his career he held various political posts, including lord high commissioner of the Church of Scotland.

Buchan's experiences in the military are responsible for the creation of our Englishman hero Richard Hannay. Years after leaving the service, Buchan revealed that his acquaintance—Army Officer Edmund Ironside—was the inspiration for Hannay.

Originally, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* was part of a popular series of four spy shocker novels—dubbed The Hannay Quartet—which have never been out of print.

“[Hannay] embodies a reassuring and vigorous symbol of the self—a signal that the British spirit remains indomitable however much the empire may be crumbling around it,” wrote Adrian Wisnicki in the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*.

The character in the play is a direct descendent of his shocker novel forerunner. This is particularly highlighted when Hannay comes face to face with the cultured, villainous Professor. After the Professor attempts to lure Hannay into an allegiance with the Professor's pro-war spy effort by exalting intellect, cold-bloodedness,

and ruthlessness in line of duty, Hannay replies that there are more important, human qualities to believe in, mainly loyalty, selflessness, sacrifice, and love. In that moment in the play, the hilarity of so few actors playing so many roles at such a fast pace recedes as Hannay's humanity comes into clearer view.

Bold, individual heroism reigns supreme, for both the Hannay of the page and of the stage. And now, the Hannay Buchan created in 1915 may add comic genius to his list of qualities.

The grand themes in *The 39 Steps* still resonate in the 21st Century. John Buchan's own granddaughter, Deborah Buchan, Lady Stewartby, may have put it best in her introduction to the 2009 Barlow script: “Despite the deft and funny way the action in this marvelous script by Patrick Barlow is portrayed on stage, those themes are not lost.” ■

<sup>1</sup> Brett F. Woods, *The Last Victorian: John Buchan and the Hannay Quartet*. Available on the John Buchan Society webpage.

Peter E. Danelski is a junior theatre and philosophy dual major at DeSales. This summer will be his third season as a member of the PSF Young Company.

Editor's Note: For more information on John Buchan and his diverse lifetime accomplishments, visit [www.johnbuchansociety.co.uk](http://www.johnbuchansociety.co.uk).

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**DESIGN** Laura Zielinski

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## Remembering Linny

In early February, when we got the news of Linny Fowler's passing, the first feeling naturally was sadness. Then came the warmth, the sensate reflection of her greatest gifts: love, compassion, and caring. They stay with us.

Marlene "Linny" Fowler gave of herself, and those gifts continue. In moments like this, the mystery of words like eternity puzzles the mind and brings us to the outer limits of comprehension. As you may know, PSF's Linny Fowler WillPower Tour is endowed in such a way that her support will, like Shakespeare's works, last not for an age but for all time, and continue to provide inspiration to this community she supported so generously.

So we say thanks to our champion, our colleague, our friend.

We love you, Linny, and miss you. We will carry on the work you shepherded so fervently.

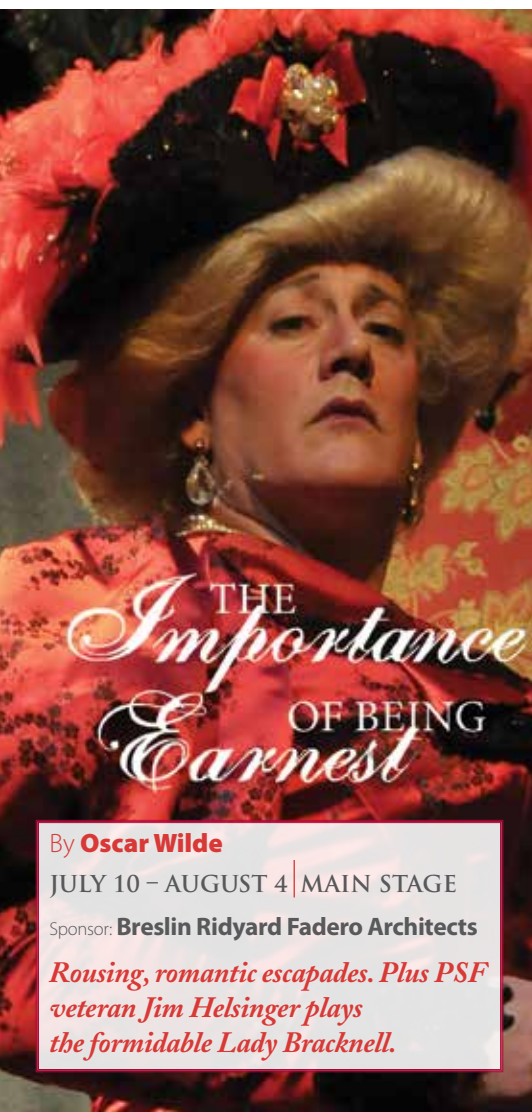
Goodnight, sweet Lady...and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. ■



Linny Fowler at the 2012 PSF Gala. Photo by Greg Tapler.

*Take her and cut her out in little stars,  
And she will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night  
And pay no worship to the garish sun.*

- William Shakespeare



By **Oscar Wilde**

JULY 10 – AUGUST 4 | MAIN STAGE

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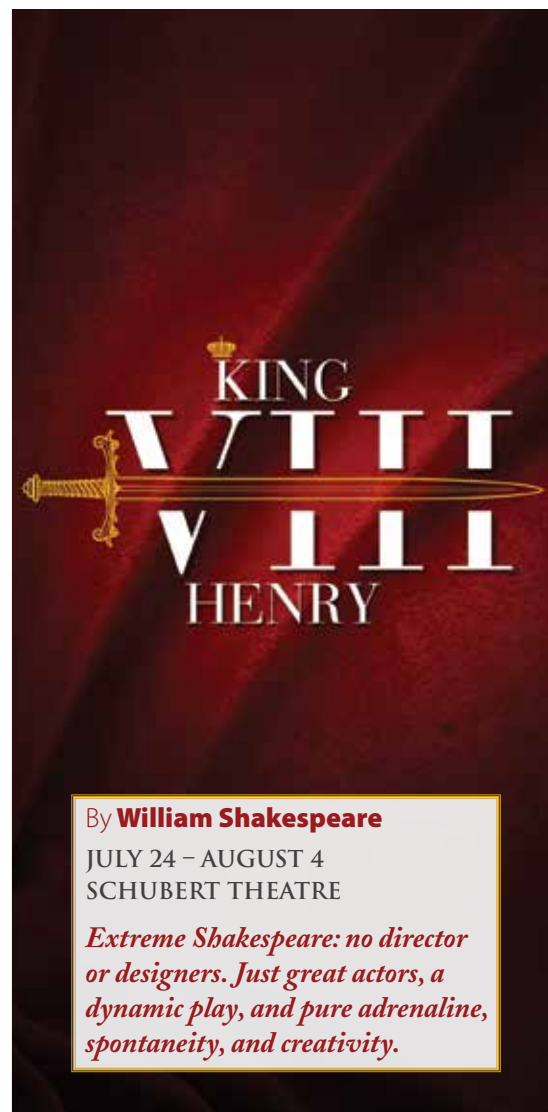


By **William Shakespeare**

JULY 18 – AUGUST 4 | MAIN STAGE

Sponsor: **Amaranth Foundation**

*"Virtue is bold, and goodness is never fearful."*



By **William Shakespeare**

JULY 24 – AUGUST 4  
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# MACBETH



Ian Bedford, left, and Ron Heneghan. Photo by Lee A. Butz.

**October 9 - 11 at DeSales University or October 14 - November 8 at your school**

**The Linny Fowler WillPower Tour** is the centerpiece of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's educational programming. Many of our recent sold-out tours were honored to be selected as part of Shakespeare in American Communities: Shakespeare for a New Generation, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest. Now in its 14th year, WillPower has served more than 115,000 students in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware and has a well-established reputation for excellence. The tour features:

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Other photos by Phil Stein.

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## Season Sponsors Look to Solve Mystery

Drs. Frank and Carol Szarko, PSF's 2013 season sponsors, are eager for the 22nd season to begin. Frank is particularly curious to see how on earth *The 39 Steps* can be presented as a comedy. Even though the Broadway producers sloganeered the play "where Hitchcock meets hilarious," Frank says he didn't see any humor in the novel when he read it in high school.

However, he is accustomed to the difference between reading a play and seeing a live performance. Back in high school, he wasn't at all fond of Shakespeare.

"Then I saw *Julius Caesar*, and I could not believe it was the same thing!" Frank said in an interview in 2009 when he and his wife graciously served as season sponsors for the first time. "I was thrilled with what was happening and thought, 'This can't be the same thing I read.' (The production) was done in modern dress, but the words were the same. I realized it was written as a play, and that's the way it should be enjoyed."

The Szarkos' children saw PSF's first season in 1992 and recommended it to their parents. Frank and Carol attended and have been coming ever since—seeing every single PSF production.

Residents of rural Berks County, Carol and Frank appreciate getting to know the work of the professional actors each season, especially those that return year after year, and they truly enjoy watching the development of the younger actors and seeing them become accomplished artists. "Every year we go to the Festival we say, it can't get any better," Frank said, "And every year, it does. It's a continuous upward spiral."

"The Szarkos' support of the Festival means that much more to me because they have a passion for the art form and for our work," said Patrick Mulcahy, producing artistic director. "Their philanthropy strengthens the Festival, and they know their Shakespeare well enough to know the difference they make."



Drs. Frank and Carol Szarko. Photo by Matt Smith.

"We know that arts organizations can't sell tickets at a price that pays (for all the costs), so we have to work harder to help," said Carol. ■





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## SUMMER 2013



### Oklahoma!

June 12 – June 30



### The 39 Steps

June 19 – July 14



### The Importance of Being Earnest

July 10 – August 4



### Measure for Measure

July 18 – August 4



### Henry VIII

July 24 – August 4

#### Children's Shows:

#### Beauty and the Beast

May 31 – August 3

#### Shakespeare for Kids

July 24 – August 3

## PSF EVENTS AND EXTRAS

From a “Picnic Throw-Down” the opening night of *Oklahoma!* to “Savoring Shakespeare”—specialty dinners themed to *Measure for Measure* and *Henry VIII*—PSF offers unique events for every taste this summer. And not all are food related. Here's what's on the menu:

### Prologues

Before every performance of *Measure for Measure* and *Henry VIII*, join us for play insights in a relaxed, informal setting. Free. Held in the theatre 45 minutes before curtain.

### Specialty Dinners

Immediately following select matinee performances, these \$32 dinners include a full bar. Call the box office at 610.282.WILL.

**Dinner with Dennis and Deb:** Dennis Razze and Deb Walter, PSF associate artistic director and director of development, respectively, host a dinner themed to each production. *Oklahoma!*, June 16; *The 39 Steps*, June 23; and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, July 21.

**Savoring Shakespeare:** Extend your appreciation of the play and linger over a Shakespeare-inspired dinner. Join noted Shakespearean scholar and PSF board member June Schlueter. August 3 and 4, *Measure for Measure* and *Henry VIII*.

### Luminosity

Saturday, June 1

Whet your appetite for the season with Luminosity: an evening of elegance and radiance that showcases PSF's exceptional talent and includes fine food, distinctive auction prizes, and themed bar. \$175 per person (tables of 8 and 10 available). Benefits education and artistic programs. Contact Deb Walter at 610.282.9455, ext. 6, or debra.walter@pashakespeare.org.

### Oklahoma! Picnic Throw-Down Friday, June 14

Tailgate like a cowboy and channel your hidden chef. We have lots of lawn space (in case of rain, we'll move to the University Center). Held on the opening of *Oklahoma!*, this is an event you won't want to miss. For more details, e-mail psf@pashakespeare.org.

### The Gospel According to Saint Mark

Monday, June 24, 7:30 p.m.

Wayne S. Turney breathes life into the character and words of St. Mark in the elegant cadence of the King James version. Well known to PSF patrons for his turns as Mr. Bennet, Polonius, and others, Turney has enraptured audiences around the country with this wonderful theatrical experience for 25 years.



### The Screwtape Letters

Monday, July 29, 7:30 p.m.

Actor Anthony Lawton, a PSF artist once named Philadelphia's “Best One-Man Theatre,” has adapted C. S. Lewis's imaginative story into a 90-minute, two-person play that crackles with wit and insight.



### Shakespeare and Catholicism Wednesday, July 31, 7:00 p.m.

A joint program with the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture featuring distinguished author and professor Joseph Pearce. Pearce is the best-selling author of books on C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Shakespeare. He has hosted two 13-part television series for EWTN on Shakespeare's Catholicism.

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