

# The Quill

The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival Newsletter • Spring 2009

## 2009 Season

June to August

### Antony and Cleopatra

by William Shakespeare

### A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

## 1★7★7★6

Music & Lyrics

by Sherman Edwards

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## Real People, Revolutionary Vision

By Thomas Rankin

Ben Franklin was trying to inject some perspective into the chaos of Independence Hall. "First things first," he told John Adams, "America. If we don't secure that, what difference will the rest make?"

Keenly aware of the need to set a priority, Franklin calls for the ultimate: independence for the colonies.

This quest, boldly portrayed in the musical *1776*, has inspired director Dennis Razze since he first experienced seeing a production in the 1970s.

"The fantastic thing is *1776* takes the Founding Fathers, people we deify as being greater than mere mortals, and it treats them as being very human. Adams, Franklin, and Jefferson were certainly extraordinary men, but they were real people who had flaws. Their dream of founding a democratic nation based on revolutionary ideals was a huge gamble that took great courage and daring."

*1776* chronicles the early days of America as the Founding Fathers discuss, argue, joke—and given that it won the Tony Award for Best Musical—sing and dance their way towards the ultimate goal of independence for a budding nation. "The thought of the Founding Fathers singing and dancing in a musical may seem silly or even disrespectful, but in *1776*, the songs and dances arise organically from the characters and the situations," Razze says. "And the period flavor of the orchestrations really captures this time and place in history."

Opening in 1969 and running for three years, *1776* won several Tony Awards, including Best Musical, along with rave reviews: "This is by no means a historical tract or a sermon on the birth of this nation. It is warm with a life of its own; it is funny, it is moving... The songs and lyrics are remarkably original," wrote John Chapman of the *New York Daily News*. "*1776* reveals the dynamic personalities that founded America involved in gripping drama."

The famous *New York Times* critic Clive Barnes, a native of England, wrote: "On the face of it, few historical incidents seem more unlikely to spawn a Broadway musical than that solemn moment in the history of mankind, the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Yet *1776*...most handsomely demonstrated that people who merely go 'on the face of it' are occasionally outrageously wrong.... [*1776*] is a most striking, most gripping musical. I recommend it without reservation. It makes even an Englishman's heart beat faster."

The uncompromising ideology of John Adams serves as a catalyst for the story and sets the tone for the play. "That little paper there deals with freedom for

Americans! And yes, even our black slaves are Americans! They are people, and they are here. If there's any other requirement, I haven't heard it."

Adams' determination drives the action of the play, while his wife Abigail propels him to keep fighting for his convictions even when he is most weary.

*continues on page 10*



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# NOTES FROM THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Occasionally, a patron or journalist will ask me why a Shakespeare festival does musicals. A brief conversation ensues about the origins of musicals such as *Les Misérables*, *A Chorus Line*, *Hair*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (all originated at Shakespeare festivals), followed by a list of the major festivals that do them every year, and capped off with the similarities between Shakespeare plays and musicals—heightened language and situations, a formal structure to the text (verse, lyrics), the use of music, singing, spectacle, movement—hopefully providing a satisfying answer regarding the natural connection.



Patrick Mulcahy

And, on the subject of connections to Shakespeare, my research in preparing to produce *1776* led me to an understanding of just how keenly attuned to Shakespeare's plays our Founding Fathers (and mothers) were. A visit to the Folger Shakespeare Library's website yielded a treasure trove of information, quoted liberally here:

We know George Washington went to a production of *Hamlet* during a trip to New York in May 1773 and an opera of *The Tempest* during the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. As president, he once hosted an amateur Shakespeare production of *Julius Caesar* in the garret of the Presidential mansion. Washington rarely quoted from the plays, but he did so in an October 1778 letter he wrote as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in which he borrowed the phrase 'like the baseless fabric of a vision' from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

One biographer writes that Thomas Jefferson "haunted the playhouses" of Williamsburg, Virginia. Later in life, he went to *The Merchant of Venice* and *Macbeth* in London. In one letter, he recommended Shakespeare for reading in the evening, explaining that "Shakespeare must be singled out by one who wishes to learn the full powers of the English language." This from the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson once encouraged a friend to read Shakespeare's plays as a guide to virtue, arguing that "a lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on the mind of a son or daughter by reading *King Lear*, than by all

the dry volumes of ethics and divinity that were ever written." According to a letter Abigail Adams wrote, when Jefferson and John Adams traveled together to Stratford, England, her while serving as diplomats in London, Jefferson "kissed the ground" upon arrival.

John Adams read and quoted Shakespeare throughout his life and filled his diaries with references to Shakespeare's plays. "Let me search for the clue which led great Shakespeare into the labyrinth of human nature," he wrote. "Let me examine how men think." Adams and his wife Abigail also often quoted passages from different Shakespeare plays in their letters to each other. They liked to compare King George III with Shakespeare's arch-villain, Richard III. "The time is hastening," she wrote to her husband in 1775, "when George, like Richard, may cry, 'My kingdom for a horse!'"

During the siege of Boston in March 1776, in a letter to John, urging him to inspire action in the Continental Congress, she quoted this passage from *Julius Caesar*:

"There is a tide in the affairs of Men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to  
fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat;  
And we must take the current when it  
serves,  
Or lose our ventures."

Shakespeare's plays are packed with characters who make compelling arguments, using powerful language to persuade, often in situations of great moment and import. The power of Shakespeare's language to move an audience is widely recognized. Equally interesting is its power to influence our actions in the world, especially in the case of leaders and, by extension, the nations they serve. The American Revolution probably would have unfolded without Mrs. Adams quoting Shakespeare. But what if it helped?

We hope you and your family will join us this summer here at this unique crossroads of inspiration, beauty, laughter, and great stories. There is a tide in the affairs of Shakespeare festivals. On such a full sea are we now afloat, thanks to you and your support. See you in the lobby.

*Patrick Mulcahy*



# ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA:

## An Interview with Patrick Mulcahy

By Thomas Rankin

**How did you decide to produce and direct *Antony and Cleopatra* this season?**

It's a fascinating play. I had thought about it for years. And then last summer, patrons responded with great enthusiasm to curtain speeches and in our survey to the idea of PSF producing the play. *Antony and Cleopatra* was their number one choice. It's a sexy title, and a play most people have not seen on stage. And we're a Shakespeare festival. The Festival continues to delve deeply into the Shakespeare canon, as we did last year with *King Lear* and with *The Winter's Tale* in 2007.

Another reason to direct the play is to explore the question: who were those people? Watching the *Rome* series on HBO reminded me of how interesting it is to glimpse these fascinating characters up close in three dimensions. Antony and Cleopatra have been described as the world's first celebrities. We've heard their names and we know of their legendary status, yet we may know very little about them. Celebrities continue to captivate.

But the best reason to do the play is to tell a great story and to explore the fundamental human longings explored in it, like the ache to transcend the mundane. The plot unfolds in antiquity; the play is about us in any era.

**The play calls for drastic set changes. Scenes go from the Roman Empire to Egypt very quickly; how do you address this challenge as a director?**

The play doesn't call for set changes, the play places Antony and Cleopatra on stage in Egypt and then a moment later we're in Rome. Shakespeare didn't have elaborate elevator systems and fly systems and he didn't

have wings to hide big set pieces. The play was written for a stage platform that is fairly neutral. This works because the language is soaring, specific, descriptive, and illuminating. Add human behavior that is equally vivid and the imagination can take care of the rest. So costumes become the scenery and the actors become architectural. That's not to say there won't be scenic magic.

In the 19th century, the habit with this play was to try to outdo the scenic overkill of the last guy's production, so they had ship battles on stage, which is odd to imagine now. There are plenty of Shakespeare plays in which on-stage battle scenes are integral to the plot. This is not one of them. But Victorian producers were catering to

the tastes of the times and also trying out all this new stage technology they were developing, just as 20 years ago a helicopter landing on stage in *Miss Saigon* was worth the price of admission.

*Antony and Cleopatra* doesn't require massive, complicated moving set pieces, though you can do it that way. Today, the general wisdom is that elaborate machinery may compete with the story. And it is possible to create stunning moments visually without a lot of stuff. Sometimes less is more.

**Could you describe the approach you're taking with this production?**

Two of the keywords driving our artistic choices are transcendence and paradox. As these notions can't be observed directly, our artistic choices want to somehow reveal the human energy of seeking transcendence and navigating paradoxes.

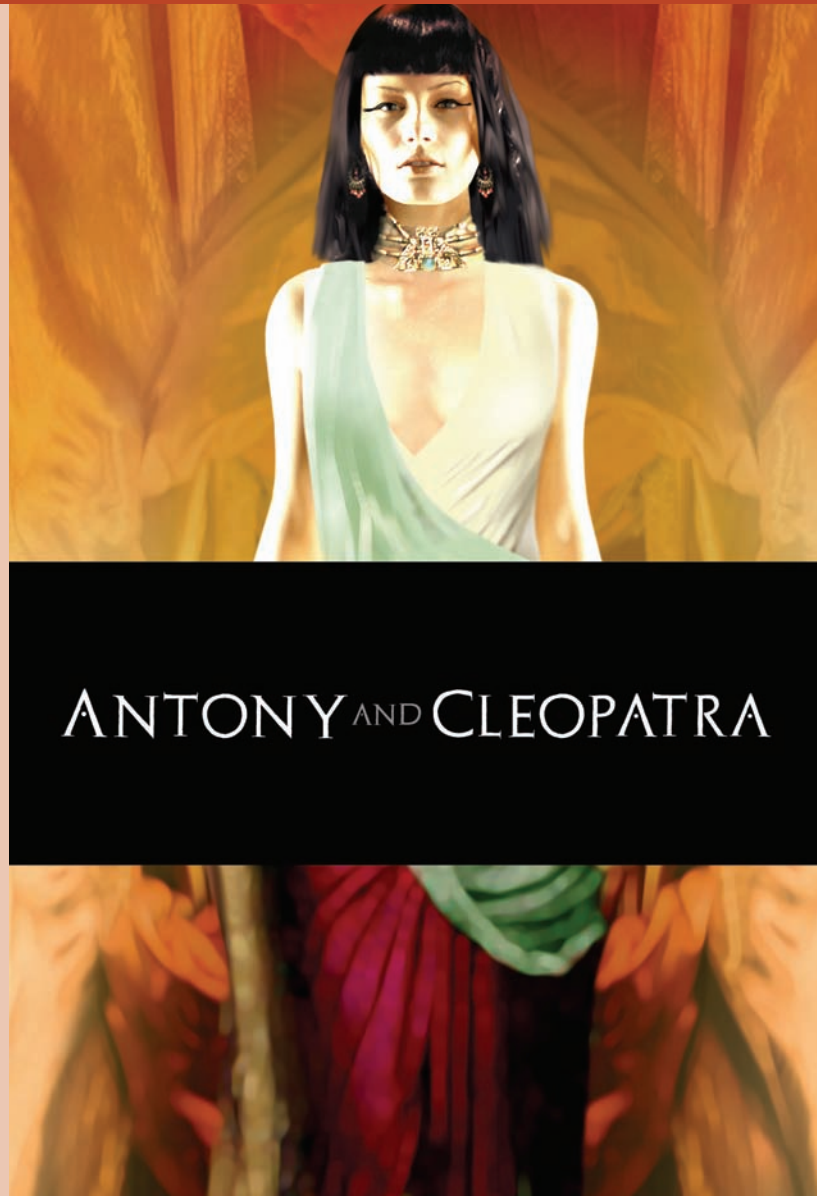
As a director, I'm always interested in making the invisible visible, illuminating the undercurrents that

drive behavior, and revealing the distinctive insights the playwright has tapped—not just the psychological, but the elemental, the primal. That's what interests me on stage. How we define the locale with scenery is important, but important as a context, a world that makes it possible for the invisible to manifest in visible human interactions.

**How would you describe the relationship between the title characters?**

In the play, Cleopatra is described as embodying "infinite variety"—which speaks to the intensity and diversity of her emotional responses. Her feelings turn on a dime. She's the archetypal star. She's unpredictable,

*continues on page 4*



facile, mercurial, which is partly what makes her interesting.

Then you have this hero, this Hercules, one of the most celebrated warriors of his time. But being the warrior hero is no longer at the center of Antony's interests—Cleopatra is. But the warrior hero is his public, political, and, to a large extent, personal identity. It was the source of his power, and his power is what creates his ability to do as he pleases. But now with Cleopatra, he wants to achieve a perfect experience of fulfillment.

Antony and Cleopatra are obsessed with one another and no other experience can measure up to the passion they feel and hope to sustain, which creates some problems for living in the world.

**Some see this play from a feminist perspective, because Cleopatra remains true to herself despite everything that happens. And then there is an argument that she is ultimately a coward, given her final actions. What's your take on her character?**

I do think that if we get to a point in rehearsal where we think we have completely figured her out, we will probably have failed. Again, the interest lies in the paradoxes and the questions are more interesting than the answers. The play should leave you asking some questions. I do agree with scholars that say Cleopatra is one of the most fascinating characters in Shakespeare for this reason.

The production will tackle one of your earlier questions—what is going on in this

relationship—not necessarily to answer it fully, only to explore both the elusive core and the distinctive dynamism of the relationship. And I think that's why more than 400 years later we're still doing Shakespeare. That's the fun: it's inexhaustible. We don't answer the questions definitively. We plumb their depths. We try to reveal some of the paradoxes and contradictions and draw them out, illumi-

creatures consumed with the honeymoon phase of relationship? Is it love? The answer is that it is an all-consuming passion and it also defies categorization.

You have two people who essentially say: "Forget my responsibilities. I want to ascend to an unparalleled, transcendent experience of connection and joy." At the end of the play I

think Antony fails, and to some extent Cleopatra succeeds. Her death is different from his. I don't think the play asks us to judge them morally. People will (and have), but I don't think the play is really interested in questions of morality. The play focuses on this human ache to transcend earthly limitation to achieve a soaring experience—perfection.

Really, it's as if they want to ascend to the god-realm. Each is perceived as a god-like character, part of which is perhaps self-promotion and marketing. But Antony claimed he was a descendant of Hercules and Cleopatra was associated with Isis, an Egyptian Goddess of motherhood and fertility.

I think at some level we all yearn to take this ultimate journey and enter space that is perfect. Antony and Cleopatra have their own way of going about actually trying to achieve it.

It goes back to the quest for the next level of existence. The more powerful we become in this realm, the closer we feel we may be getting to inhabiting the next one. We're not done with Antony and Cleopatra. I think we're a long way from that. ■

Thomas Rankin is a graduating English major at DeSales University who served as an editorial intern for PSF last fall.



In one of many films inspired by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor created a sensation in the 1963 film *Cleopatra*. Reprinted with permission ©Sunset Boulevard/

nate them. We can't help it. We recognize them from our own experience. It's just more intense with Antony and Cleopatra.

**It's almost saddening to know that their love can never fully get to where they want it to be.**

I suppose that's why they call it a tragedy, which raises an interesting question. Is it a tragedy? I'd say yes, but it does not fall into the tragedy category smoothly or easily. It is probably the tragedy with the most humor. And is their love real, or is it self absorption bearing no resemblance to what we might call a mature love. Are they just fascinating



# Playing Legends:

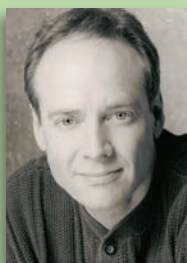
## The Actors' Perspectives on Antony and Cleopatra

The mysterious imprints of Antony and Cleopatra are stamped onto our collective consciousness, and perhaps our collective unconscious. Among the reasons they continue to fascinate is that they practically define erotic tension, and their potent and myriad desires reflect our own fundamental human needs for so many things: power, belonging, freedom. Thus, their story has endured and been interpreted and re-interpreted throughout history. Although rehearsals for PSF's production do not begin until June, actors Greg Wood and Lauren Lovett offer some initial thoughts about their characters.

### Greg Wood

Antony is the finest soldier of his age. He certainly is the last one standing. Caesar is dead. Pompey is dead. There is only Antony and he

knows it. Unfortunately, it's why he doesn't see Octavian coming. Octavian is a shrewd and manipulative politician while Antony is up front and direct. Who do you think will win?



Greg Wood

Antony has his own code. He is loyal to Antony. His men. Then to Rome. In that order. That's why Cleopatra throws such a monkey wrench into things. She has changed his code. His men don't understand him and they no longer feel led. And it's obvious to all that his loyalty to Rome has shifted to Egypt. I believe Antony and Cleopatra have found their match, their equal, in the other. It's not about politics; they truly can't get enough of each other. I can relate to being blinded by love and passion—I hope we all can.

When I begin rehearsing Antony I will start with the text. It's what I have to play. So what other characters say about Antony is one key and—of course—what Antony says about himself. Then, if there is an historical context, as there is with Antony, I'll read as much as I can and use as much as I can. I'm really looking forward to what Patrick has to

say. Because after all the work I do on my own, I still have to fit that into his vision of the play. In short, I have a lot of work to do!

### Lauren Lovett

I think Cleopatra and Antony are addicted to one another. They exhibit classic addict behavior: distrust in all including one another and themselves, sudden mood shifts and irrational words and acts, and devastating errors in judgment, leading to their ultimate demise.



Lauren Lovett

Cleopatra has, in her younger days, been a lover to several powerful men, not the least of whom is Julius Caesar. She has fought tooth and nail for the power she herself has achieved, mostly by means of her sexual enchantment over her lovers and by her ruthlessness to gain whatever she desires. She is driven by many internal forces, including this lust for her men and her lust for overall power. Once she and Antony become involved, her world revolves around keeping him close. She will say and do anything, often contradicting herself to have Antony beside her. She also knows, even from the start of the play, that she will never possess him completely—his marriage (and subsequent re-marriage) and his supposed commitment to the triumvirate are poison to her.

To relate to Cleopatra, I must imagine being a woman of such reputed power and magnetism—a queen in a world of brutal male rulers—who has at last found the man with whom she might die, or at least for whom she might die.

Interviewed by Jeremy Sabol, a graduating theatre major and PSF marketing intern.



Costume renderings for PSF's production by Lisa L. Zinni

the complete works of  
**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**  
 (abridged)

# meet the m

**CHRIS MULLEN**

What was your first reaction to Shakespeare?  
 A painful RASH.

Favorite Shakespeare play:  
*Starlight Express.*



**Most memorable stage combat moment:**

Stabbing Hamlet in the leg... I mean through the leg and I'm not kidding. I wish the fight director could have been there when this Laertes put the hot steel to the melancholy prince.

**My favorite thing about wearing tights is:**

They plump when you cook 'em!

**If I were a Shakespeare play, I would be:**

King John. Because I've no clue what it's about.

**If my pet were a character in Shakespeare he would be:**

Yorick. My goldfish is dead. Thanks a lot for bringing it up!

**If I had a hammer, I'd:**

Bang Bang Claudius, praying or not.

**If I could travel in a time machine to anytime in Shakespeare's life:**

I'd totally want to be sitting in when he recorded Sgt. Pepper's! What a visionary!

Zounds!  
 What  
 boil-brained  
 nut-hooks are  
 these who dare in  
 the two hours traffic of our  
 stage traverse *all* my plays?  
 O, I am Fortune's fool!





# avens of mayhem

## CHRIS FAITH



**What was your first reaction to Shakespeare?**

If Marcia Brady can play "Juliet," how hard can it be?

**What's your favorite word in Shakespeare (and why)?**

"Coxcomb," for obvious reasons.

**My actor's nightmare?**

I'm talking to a patron after a show and they say one of the following:

"That was so cute."

"You work so hard."

"What's your real job?"

"How much time have you given yourself for the 'acting' thing to work out?"

**Most memorable stage combat moment:**

I attended a production of *Macbeth* and saw a dagger fly out of an actor's hand and stop against an elderly lady's temple. She was rushed to the nearest E.R. and received stitches and, I imagine later, a lifetime supply of complimentary tickets to the theatre. Please note, this incident did NOT occur at PSF. Here, all stage combat weapons are holograms.

**If my pet were a character in Shakespeare he would be:**

Of course, I would cast my toy poodle, Gracie in the role of "Crab" the dog in *Two Gentleman of Verona*, because she's, well, a dog. If all of a sudden she decided to scratch and lick herself on stage, no one is going to say, "You know something? That moment really didn't ring true for me."

**If I could travel in a time machine to anytime in Shakespeare's life, I'd:**

Go to the night when he made it with Gwyneth Paltrow. That was hot!

## SHAWN FAGAN



**What's the funniest/strangest thing that ever happened to you on stage in a Shakespeare play?**

During the balcony scene in an outdoor *R&J*, a plane flew over, REALLY low, just as I said "It was the lark, no nightingale."

**Best audience ad-lib during a Shakespeare performance?**

When I was playing Romeo, as I exited through the audience after refusing to fight Tybalt, I walked passed a clearly incensed 13-year-old boy who shouted at me, "Oh COME ON, Romeo!"

**If I could never do another Shakespeare play I would:**

Focus on Eugene O'Neill, whose plays are almost as long and wordy.

**I'll never forget when my acting teacher said to me after a Shakespeare scene in class:**

"Mr. Fagan, this is organic chemistry, please sit down and be quiet."

**If my pet were a character in Shakespeare:**

My cat would be Titus Andronicus, I think, because when he looks at me I'm pretty sure he's wondering what it'd be like to eat my face.

**Most memorable word-burger in a Shakespeare play:**

The last time I did *R&J*, Juliet said, "Such a wagoner as Phaeton would whip you to the breast!" Yes he would, Juliet, yes he would.

**If I could travel in a time machine to any-time in Shakespeare's life, I'd:**

Screw that, I'd go back and see the dinosaurs. Or maybe go back to like a year and a half ago and bet big on the Giants in the Super Bowl.

Photos of Christopher Patrick Mullen and Chris Faith by Lee A. Butz.

Amy Lobmeyer Best,  
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## Cinderella

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Get out your ball gown (or princess costume) and join Cinderella on her journey from her quiet corner in the kitchen to the King's palace where she'll meet her Prince. Children of all ages will rediscover the value of kindness and that true beauty comes from within.

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By Erin Mullen, PSF Education Director

## Shakespeare Competition 2009

Only in its second year, the PSF Shakespeare Competition tripled the number of participants: 75 student actors from 15 schools representing 12 counties in Pennsylvania and New Jersey performed scenes and monologues in a full day program on February 28, 2009. Scholarships totaling \$15,000 were awarded and are renewable for four years should the student choose to attend DeSales University as a theatre major. Award recipients were presented with a trophy during the closing assembly of the competition.

Grounded in direct engagement with Shakespeare's text, the PSF Shakespeare Competition provides multiple performance opportunities, direct evaluation of each performance by working theatre professionals, and observation of peer and university performances. This valuable tool for learning was staffed this year by professional actors Brad DePlanche, Heather Krause, Sally Mercer, Christopher Patrick Mullen, and H. Michael Walls, who served as adjudicators and workshop instructors.

The students' admiration for Shakespeare was unmistakable and their enthusiasm for each other's work was electric. The competition created an enriching educational experience—and built new Facebook friendships—for all the participants. Save the date, March 6, 2010, for the third annual competition.

## WillPower

Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), WillPower 2008 was the largest, most far-reaching, and most successful tour in its nine-year history. A record 15,500 students saw the 2008 Linny Fowler WillPower tour of *Much Ado About Nothing*, bringing our nine-year total up to 75,500 new Shakespeare fans. We also visited 10 Pennsylvania counties that were new to the PSF tour: 38 counties down, 29 to go!

## Tenth Anniversary Tour

Friends, Romans, Freshmen: This fall, the WillPower tour will feature an 80-minute performance of Shakespeare's epic tragedy *Julius Caesar*. Teachers are booking the tour at a record pace, which clearly indicates that WillPower is making an impact and is achieving its major goal to "turn on" young minds to the power of language. Check out the WillPower page on our website for booking information.

## Prologues

Last season, I had a great time discussing *King Lear* with many of you during the pre-show prologues. (Matt Pfeiffer and others led the *Twelfth Night* prologues because I was playing Viola.) Sometimes we even had to continue our chat in the lobby due to the needs of the show beginning and patron seating. People of all ages are actively participating at the Festival—and making the most of their experiences here. Sharing insights and asking the questions on everyone's minds, such as "What does the title *Twelfth Night* have to do with the play anyway?" sparked discussion and deepened the experience. Join us in the theatre 45 minutes before each performance of a Shakespeare play this summer. Prologues are a free and festive way to engage with the play. ■



# PSF 2009 Season Sponsors: Drs. Frank and Carol Szarko

In school, *Julius Caesar* could not have made a worse impression on Drs. Frank and Carol Szarko, PSF's 2009 season sponsors. *Macbeth* was equally deadly. [Forgive the pun.] Read as part of their high school curriculum, Shakespeare translated into absolute drudgery.

"Then I saw *Julius Caesar*, and I could not believe it was the same thing!" Frank said in a recent interview. "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' experience mirrors that of many patrons. "If you're pre-med, there's no time for electives," says Carol, an anesthesiologist. Until the Szarkos' two college-aged children enthusiastically recommended *Romeo and Juliet* following a performance they saw in PSF's inaugural 1992 season, Carol's only experience with Shakespeare dated back to high school. "We've been coming [to PSF] ever since."

Residents of rural Berks County, Carol and Frank appreciate getting to know 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 says. "And every year, it does. It's a continuous upward spiral."

They are proud to have seen every PSF production. Any favorites? Frank says: "Every time I think I have a favorite, something else comes up." *Hamlet* ranks as Carol's favorite. "We saw *Hamlet* with Greg Wood [in 1995] and our daughter later saw Kenneth Branagh play the role in England, and she said Greg Wood was every bit as good."

A trip with their daughter to Scotland included a visit to the castle where Mel Gibson's *Hamlet* was filmed. "They still had parts of the scenery stored there," Frank noted. [Just down a precipitous road from the castle, they called their son from the red phone booth made famous in the Burt Lancaster film *Local Hero*.]

Over the course of time, the Szarkos' opinion of Shakespeare evolved. "Theirs is a journey we hope everyone can take," says Patrick Mulcahy, producing artistic director. "To take a leadership role in times like these is a true testament to their belief in the value of our work."

Carol notes, "We know that arts organizations can't sell tickets for a price that pays [for all the costs], so we have to work harder to help."

"We are so grateful for their support," says Jeanne Bitler, director of development. "Frank and Carol are prime examples of the positive impact that individuals can have on an organization such as PSF." ■



Photo by John Kish IV



# COMIC MASTER TAKES THE HELM

## *A Midsummer Night's Dream, July 8 - August 2*

By Lisa Higgins

"No Shakespearean comedy offers such a feast of magic, humor, music, and spectacle as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," according to *The Essential Shakespeare Handbook*.<sup>1</sup> Anyone familiar with Jim Helsing's work as an actor and director will know: no Shakespearean artist can conjure a feast quite like he can.

Helsing brings a wealth of experience to the banquet table. He's performed as several of the "rude mechanicals"—the rustic local artisans preparing to entertain at an upcoming royal wedding—Flute (twice), Snout, and Bottom. The Festival's upcoming production marks his third round directing the play.

"The more experience you have, the more each production becomes a tapestry of all the favorite pieces you've ever seen," he says. "At the same time, you're looking for new people with new ideas to weave into the play."

Proclaimed by Shakespearean scholar Harold Bloom as "(Shakespeare's) first undoubted masterwork, without flaw...one of overwhelming originality and power," the play was set in ancient Athens, an ideal locale for breaking the boundaries of reality and illusion.<sup>2</sup> Yet none of the past productions Helsing participated in were set in Athens, where Shakespeare placed it, creating the ideal opportunity for PSF's production this summer.

For this summer's performance, Helsing and his design team have set the play in Athens in two different time periods. The young lovers—Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius—begin their journey in the Athens of the 1960s: "A blend of *Zorba the Greek* and *Never on Sunday*," a time Helsing describes as an "innocent, romantic time, the late Fifties, early Sixties."



Jim Helsing with his son, James.

When the lovers escape the city for the forest, the setting transforms to ancient Greece. "Those that like their Shakespeare classical will have classical," notes Helsing, "Those that like something different in their (Shakespeare) will have something different."

In the city palace, Duke Theseus and Hippolyta are planning their wedding, just four days away, when they are confronted by Hermia and her father who are in conflict over who Hermia should marry. Hermia wants to marry Lysander; her father has chosen Demetrius. Reminded by the Duke that she should obey her father or suffer death, Hermia and Lysander flee to the forest. Helena tells Demetrius of their flight and then pursues him for his love as he pursues Hermia into the woods.

Once in the forest, the fairy kingdom of magic reigns. "The element of magic is conveyed through music, dance, and lighting—it's not magical in the sense of a magician's magic. The forest is magical in the sense of beauty," Helsing says, noting that "more than half of the characters are not human." Oberon, king of the fairies—to be played by Christopher Patrick Mullen (a role that marks his 24th with PSF) is piqued with his queen Titania and casts a spell on her while she sleeps.

Despite Oberon's irritation, he magnanimously decides to assist Helena, whom he's overheard proclaiming her love for Demetrius, who spurns her. Oberon tells the trickster Puck to enchant Demetrius so he will love her, but Puck enchants the wrong fellow, and merry confusion ensues.

Another group of Athenians, the rude mechanicals, are also gathering in the forest to rehearse their entertainment, a play in honor of the Duke's impending wedding, out of sight from their fellow citizens. The play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, is a love story and features Bottom as Pyramus, a warrior/lover, a role Bottom is most proud to play. When Bottom is momentarily alone, Puck transforms Bottom's head

into that of an ass, frightening away his fellow cast members. Perplexed, Bottom sings a song to himself.

Awakened, and under Oberon's spell, the fairy queen Titania discovers Bottom, falls instantly in love with him, ass's head and all, and commands her fairy attendants to serve him. "Bottom is Shakespeare's Everyman," Bloom writes. "He is at once a sublime clown and a great visionary."

One of the stars of the Philadelphia theatre scene, Scott Greer, is making his Festival debut as Bottom. "I'm excited to introduce PSF audiences to this super-talented actor and I hope some Philadelphia audiences familiar with Scott will come to see him and discover PSF, too," Helsing says. "I must say, I'm looking forward to seeing his Bottom."

Festival favorite Carl N. Wallnau will play two roles: Peter Quince, a friend of Bottom's, and Egeus, Hermia's father.

The Schubert Theatre provides an exceptionally dynamic venue for *Midsummer*'s magic and comedy, Helsing says, noting that the play ranks as one of his favorites. "You come into any production of *Midsummer* and you know that audience is seeing the playwright at his best, and you know you're going to make someone in the audience into a Shakespeare fan."

Perhaps *Midsummer* works its greatest magic of all with its audience. "Comedy is very life affirming and healing," notes this master of comedy and weaver of *Midsummer* dreams. ■

1. A fixture in the book collections of many PSF staff members, *The Essential Shakespeare Handbook* by Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding is a wonderfully illustrated, reader-friendly volume.

2. Bloom, Harold, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Riverhead Books, 1998.



Christopher Patrick Mullen photo by Lee A. Butz.



Carl N. Wallnau photo by Lee A. Butz.





"Writing the Declaration of Independence, 1776" by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris. Oil on canvas. Printed with permission of Virginia Historical Society.

### 1776, continued from page 1

"Have you forgotten what you used to say to me?" she asks John. "I haven't. 'Commitment, Abby, commitment. There are only two creatures of value on the face of this earth—those with a commitment and those who require the commitment of others.'"

Razze notes that the story of John and Abigail is a great love story. "These two people share an extraordinary love. They exchanged many beautiful love letters while John was in Philadelphia and she was on their farm in Massachusetts. These letters were used to create some of the actual dialogue in the play."

Although Adams at times seems discouraged by the lack of enthusiasm of the other members of Continental Congress, Ben Franklin's character prevails with humor: "Revolutions come into this world like bastard children—half improvised and half compromised." When Adams complains that Congress is turning a deaf ear to his cries for Independence, Franklin replies "...why don't you give it up? Nobody listens to you—you're obnoxious and disliked."

Casting actors to fill such enormous roles is a challenge. "Who are you going to ask to take on the role of such historical icons? Who can capture their very essence? On a practical level, you need very strong actors who are adept at playing period roles, which is something classically trained actors excel at. But they also must be able to sing and dance. Add to that the necessity that they must at least resemble the men everyone knows from the paintings."

Razze's intense passion lies in the vital themes of hope and freedom that course through 1776. To him, this play truly speaks to our modern times: "We just finished one of the most important elections in recent history. And today, we still look to ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, because those ideals still ring true and the work to achieve them is still not finished. A lot of the time we have to remind ourselves of the basic principles that got this whole great experiment started."

"I don't know if the Founding Fathers were really any better than the people we are today, but putting their signatures on that revolutionary and inspired document was an act of great courage."

Although 1776 is not perfectly accurate by historical standards, the essential elements are true: the bold idea of a free society was brought to life by simple, ordinary men. In Ben Franklin's words: "We're men, no more no less, trying to get a nation started." ■

### Win a Trip to Tuscany!

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Call 610.282.WILL, ext. 6. • [pashakespeare.org/tuscany](http://pashakespeare.org/tuscany)

### FACING SHAKESPEARE

**Saturday, June 27, 4:00 p.m.  
Trexler Library  
DeSales University Campus  
FREE**

Join Shakespearean scholar June Schlueter for an engaging exploration of a variety of portraiture and other images in search of the real Shakespeare.





# Partners in Revolution

With the nation's rich history written in the hills and valleys surrounding The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, only a day's horseback ride to Philadelphia, there are many opportunities to broaden the experience of attending the Tony Award-winning musical *1776*.

PSF is offering several opportunities for audiences on location at the Festival, as well as unique experiences through programs offered with the company's "Partners in Revolution."

**The Declaration of Independence:** Hear it read live on PSF's Main Stage. Sat., July 4, at 5:00 p.m., after the 2:00 p.m. show of *1776*. (Attendance at performance not required.) Free.

**Notes on the Revolution and 1776:** DeSales humanities professor Dr. Kenneth

Nivison gives a historical view. Sat., June 20, 6:00 p.m. Main Stage. Free.

**Meet the Actors:** Following the 8:00 p.m. performances on Thursday, June 25 and Thursday, July 2, join the actors for a lively conversation about their roles on stage and off. Free.

**Historic Bethlehem John Adams Walking Tour:** See Bethlehem through the eyes of this famous patriot, who was impressed with what he saw. All PSF patrons attending *1776* receive 15% off with their *1776* ticket stub. Saturdays in July at 2:30 p.m. Tours start at the Welcome Center, 505 Main Street in Bethlehem, and last about an hour. The cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children (ages 6 to 12); less the 15% discount. Reservations are encouraged. Call 610.691.6055 or 1.800.360.8687.

**The Allentown Art Museum** "Fashion in Film" exhibit showcases 36 period costumes worn by high-profile celebrities in film classics. Four centuries of style are featured, including reproductions of colonial era costumes for *Jefferson in Paris*, as well as historical textiles from the Allentown Art Museum's own collection. May 17 - Aug. 9. For information, call 610.432.4333 or visit [www.allentownartmuseum.org](http://www.allentownartmuseum.org).

Look for more information on our website: [www.pashakespeare.org/partners](http://www.pashakespeare.org/partners).



## Casting News

Of the myriad of processes involved in creating a festival of theatre, casting ranks as one of the most challenging and the most exciting. "The sheer number of roles—106 this year—requires significant engineering and planning," says Producing Artistic Director Patrick Mulcahy. In addition to the actors already known to the Festival artistic team, thousands of others submit their resumes directly or through agents throughout the year. "Every season, we seek to balance the company with terrific new talent and Festival favorites," he says.

In the Tony Award-winning musical *1776*, PSF audiences can look forward to seeing Christopher Coucill (*King Lear*) play Stephen Hopkins and Spencer Plachy (Christian/*Cyrano de Bergerac*) play Thomas Jefferson. In *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* two seasoned funny

men, Christopher Patrick Mullen and Chris Faith, join Shawn Fagan, a PSF newcomer though an equally seasoned actor and comedian. "We were howling in the auditions," Mulcahy says. "These guys are funny."

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* will feature Carl N. Wallnau (Malvolio/*Twelfth Night*) as Egeus and Peter Quince, Zack Robidas (Cassius/*Othello*) as Demetrius, and Christopher Patrick Mullen as Oberon and Theseus (in his 24th role for PSF).

In addition to Greg Wood and Lauren Lovett in the title roles in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Anthony Lawton (Feste/*Twelfth Night*) will play Enobarbus, Wayne S. Turney (Ragueneau/*Cyrano*) as Lepidus, Ian Bedford (Lodovico/*Othello*) as Scarus, Ian Merrill Peakes (Iago/*Othello*) as Canidius and Proculeius, Erin Clare Hurley (Viola/*Twelfth Night*) as Charmian, and Spencer Plachy as Agrippa.



Left to right: Christopher Coucill, Erin Clare Hurley, Ian Bedford, Ian Merrill Peakes, Spencer Plachy, and Wayne S. Turney. Photos by Lee A. Butz.

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# The Great Divorce

Based on the novel by C.S. LEWIS

Adapted and performed by  
ANTHONY LAWTON

**One Night Only:** June 22, 7:30 p.m.

Lauded by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in this “masterful solo show,” actor Anthony Lawton delivers “a wondrous ride filled with dazzling insight and language.” Lewis’ own favorite among his works, *The Great Divorce* is an allegorical journey between Hell and Heaven, a journey that blends philosophical imagination and theatrical magic.

“Unmissable! From the quiet, seemingly casual beginning to the unforgettable final moments, Lawton has us in the palm of his hand.” – *Philadelphia City Paper*



Anthony Lawton photos by Lee A. Butz

*Enrich,  
Inspire,  
Engage  
and  
Entertain...*

## Shakespearean Insights on WDIY 88.1 FM

PSF is proud to partner with WDIY 88.1 FM, which will air “Shakespearean Insights” from mid-May through July 31. Listen at 10:04 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and at 5:29 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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New from the PSF Education Department! Designed to shake it up with elementary-aged children. No tights required as Team Shakespeare introduces kids to the kid-friendliest of Shakespeare’s characters and situations. Shakespeare—with all the magical mischief of the fairies and all the wonder of his words.

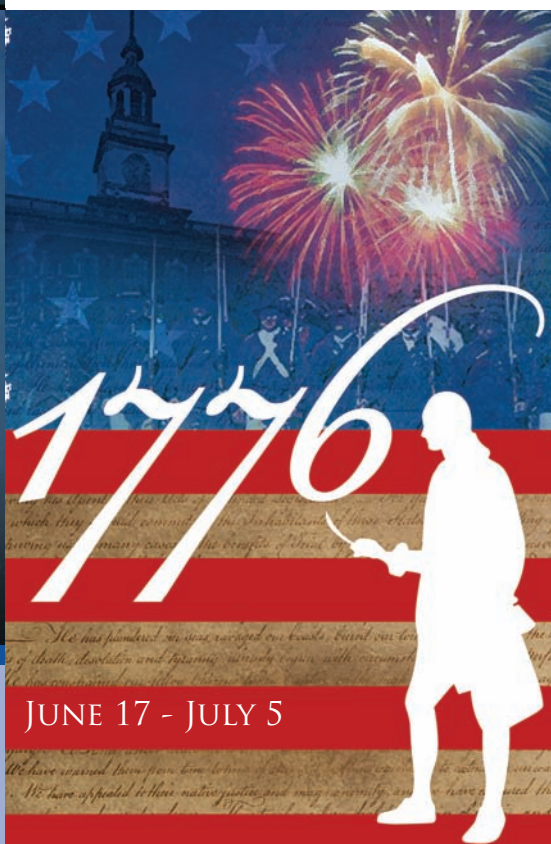
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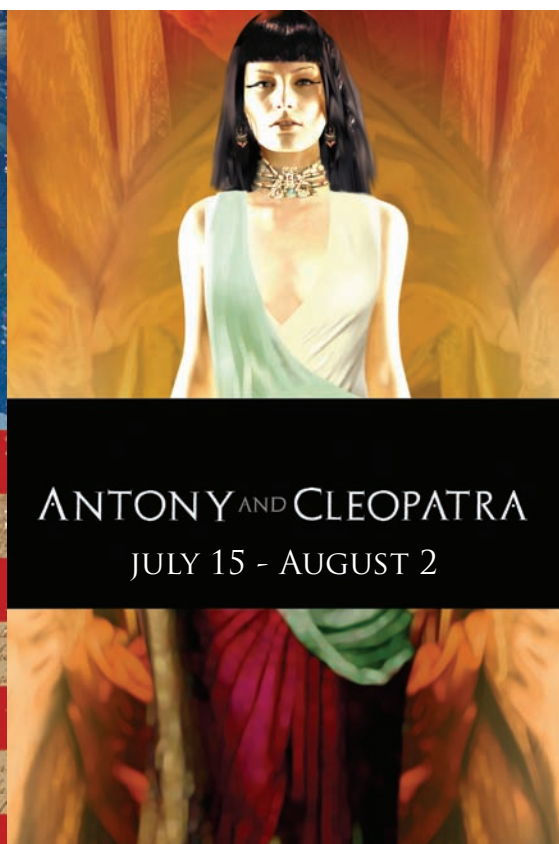
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**JUNE 17 - JULY 5**



**ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA**  
JULY 15 - AUGUST 2

Special programming and “Partners in Revolution” related to 1776: See story page 11.

Featuring Greg Wood as Antony and Lauren Lovett as Cleopatra. See story page 3.

**Tickets: 610.282.WILL • pashakespeare.org**