The Quill

The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival Newsletter • Summer 2017

Imagine Shakespeare's Journey Home to the Forest of Arden, If You Like

By Heather Helinsky, dramaturg

In 1599, the year historians believe that *As You Like It* was written, William Shakespeare was already a busy, successful poet of the theatre. By then, he had possibly seventeen or nineteen plays already rotating in the repertory of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. It was the same summer that the Globe Theatre was under construction. England was at war on two fronts with both an Irish rebellion and the Spanish Armada. However, in spite of all this, sometimes family takes priority.

By the summer or early fall of 1599, William needed to leave his busy cosmopolitan life in London behind him and go home. His wife's mother was dying. Shakespeare's parents, both of whom were still alive, were in their seventies and in need of care. Shakespeare's daughters, Susanna and Judith, were entering their teenage years; sixteen and fourteen respectively. Shakespeare's only living sister, Joan, was getting married. A few months after Joan's wedding, she gave birth to a son, who she named after his godfather: William. Birth and death: the infant "mewling and puking in the nurses arms" and "the last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history"…but in the middle of all of that, a wedding. The lovers. Shakespeare's sister in love! And his two young daughters transforming into adulthood, faster than Shakespeare probably preferred.

A seventeenth century biographer, John Aubrey, was told by Shakespeare's neighbors that Shakespeare "was wont to go to Warwickshire once a year." Based on maps of the time, the road home was a little less than 100 miles; a three days journey on horseback if the roads were dry and the weather was fair. Often, the roads were not well-maintained and English weather not always sunny. One doesn't have to imagine much to understand Shakespeare's emotion of leaving his active theatre company behind to return to his family's country life, as Sonnet 50 records.

"How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek, my weary travel's end,
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
"Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend!"
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on….
…For that same groan doth put this in my mind:
My grief lies onward and my joy behind."

What could have been on Shakespeare's mind in between London and home in Stratford-upon-Avon, near the Forest of Arden? Did he rush home? Did he stop at the taverns along the way? Did he run into soldiers being mustered to go to war? As he passed the farmers and shepherds working in the fields, did it stir up childhood memories?

Shakespeare's family was a long line of farmers, and his childhood would have been spent in the surrounding woods and fields, and in tiny towns with traditional seasonal festivals and folk customs. But Shakespeare was now a man of the world, a man of London, and a man of some wealth. He recently bought his family a new house in Stratford that cost one hundred and twenty pounds. He played one role in town as the harried and successful playwright, another role in the countryside as the eldest brother responsible for providing for his family.

But what was his state as he traveled in-between?

There's the romantic and pastoral idea of a country life, but was that what Shakespeare saw as he traveled between London and Warwickshire? Perhaps, if

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Notes from the Producing Artistic Director


Patrick Mulcahy

The second half of our summer season is always an exciting time.

This is the period when a patron traveling from afar can see three plays in a single visit in the course of a few days. In the last two weeks of the season, we offer 55 performances of six different plays in our two theatres, often offering six performances in a single day.

By now, you may already know that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is a blast, providing a hilariously farcical approach to generating laughs in this quick-change comedy.

The Three Musketeers is our Indiana Jones play for the summer season, a swashbuckling comedy featuring extraordinary artists who will also demonstrate their athletic acumen in swordfight after swordfight!

As You Like It is our festive comedy, bringing poignancy and delight, as Rosalind and friends seek to reconnect with their humanity in the Forest of Arden.

Troilus and Cressida is the 29th of Shakespeare's plays PSF has produced, and will provide a rare opportunity to see this striking play, classified as a comedy, but which defies categorization. Heroic ideals meet tarnished realities that care little for the love between Troilus and Cressida. This production is in the hands of the actors, who take charge in our "extreme Shakespeare" process, which mirrors many of the circumstances of Elizabethan rehearsals.

Find some kids somewhere and bring them to the deliriously engaging productions of *The Ice Princess* and *Shakespeare for Kids,* each of which run through the first week in August.

And, pre-show, experience our newly enhanced outdoor environment, On the Green, where you can now enjoy our new terrace seating under the tent.

We look forward to seeing you in the lobby. Thank you for joining us.

Patrick Mulcahy

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PSF is a participant in the Audience (R)Evolution Cohort Grants program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the professional not-for-profit American theatre.

Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's summer productions of *As You Like It* and *Troilus & Cressida*, as well as the 2017 fall WillPower tour of *Romeo and Juliet*, are part of *Shakespeare in American Communities*, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

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it was a festival season, farmers would be out celebrating the harvest with the traditional pagan celebration, "Harvest Home." Records of the time tell a different story. Stratford was struggling. The fires of 1594 and 1595 destroyed 200 houses in Stratford. The great Forest of Arden had been cut down from its original size over the years; cleared for pastures, cornfields, and iron mines. Those who worked the fields often were homeless and seasonally unemployed. Those who were wealthy could hoard grain in the barns and then profit off the poor farmers as they suffered from bad harvests.

Pastoral literature is escapist and Elizabethans hungered for it. The country provides the setting for pure romantic love. Shepherds spend their days in the fields writing poetry to a beautiful shepherdess. In pastoral literature, shepherds are free of the complexity and corruption of court life. Poets of Elizabethan England, many of whom came from wealthier backgrounds than Shakespeare and educated at Oxford, romanticized the pastoral life as easy, lazy, and idyllic. Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, Robert Greene are a few of many writers of the time that made the pastoral fashionable. In 1588, the courtier and poet Thomas Lodge, on a tedious sea voyage to the Canaries, wrote a pastoral romance called *Rosalynde: Euphues Golden Legacy* that once published, became an instant best-seller in 1590, and frequently reprinted.

However, Shakespeare did not take the easy road and turn *As You Like It* into a light romantic comedy. While the play certainly delivers Shakespeare's usual wit and romance, *As You Like It* experiments with mixing light and dark. This rendering of both sides of the forest is what drew director Matt Pfeiffer to investigate the play this summer at PSF. "I first saw *As You Like It* at PSF in 1996, when I was nineteen years old, starring Ian Merrill Peakes as Orlando. I've been fortunate to work on Shakespeare's plays most of my adult life. This is now my 19th season at PSF. Now as an adult, I realize that there was a darkness to the play as these characters grapple with loss and their search to find a place in the world. Rosalind suffers the loss of her father's presence and power at court, Orlando suffers from his older brother. All this makes the backdrop of romance more palpable. Now I suddenly find myself hearing this play in a new way."

While the plot of *As You Like It* has similarities to Lodge's novel, two characters are Shakespeare's original invention: Jaques and Touchstone. Both inject satire into the gentle form of pastoral romance. There's a hard edge to their humor not found in traditional pastoral. Pfeiffer decided to cast Ian Merrill Peakes, whom he originally saw at PSF as Orlando, as the dour Jaques, who delivers the famous speech of "The Seven Ages of Man."

> "IT FEELS LIKE A great TIME TO OFFER AN AUDIENCE A CHANCE TO grapple WITH time, AGE, AND ULTIMATELY THE WAYS IN WHICH we Love"
> – MATT PFEIFFER

Pfeiffer has also cast some familiar collaborators from prior PSF productions. Marnie Schulenburg and Zack Robidas, who have played romantic leads in Pfeiffer's productions of *Henry V* and *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, will return to play Rosalind and Orlando, respectively. Dan Hodge, who appeared in clownish roles in PSF's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Pfeiffer's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Arden Theatre Company in Philadelphia, will play Touchstone. These returning company members work well together with Pfeiffer's ideas about how to embrace Shakespeare's plays for a 21st century audience. "We've basically spent one hundred years conceptualizing Shakespeare's plays and it was necessary and inspiring work. But I'm more deeply interested in being in conversation with the history of these plays and how Shakespeare's company would have worked on them."

Pfeiffer will also bring on another familiar collaborator, sound designer Alex Bechtel, into his production. In the past, Pfeiffer has interwoven spirited live music, something that has become a trademark of his aesthetics. However, with *As You Like It*, Pfeiffer may change up his approach. *As You Like It* begins in the restrictive and dangerous world of the court. Esau Pritchett makes his PSF debut as Duke Frederick who has overthrown his brother Duke Senior, Rosalind's father. "The court is an oppressive environment, and once the characters escape from the court to the forest, they can shed these restrictions." It's still important for Pfeiffer to hold on to his musical aesthetics, to allow Shakespeare's poetry to breathe.

What Pfeiffer finds emotionally true about the story is that when we experience loss, like Rosalind and Orlando, we retreat into ourselves. Pfeiffer finds a powerful metaphor in Rosalind needing to escape into the clothes of a man to discover her true inner self.

Dressed as a man, Rosalind discovers an inner confidence to woo her love Orlando. Dressed as a woman, Rosalind finds herself in dire straits and is trapped from doing anything about it as far as her gender will allow.

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Marnie Schulenburg
Rosalind

Zack Robidas
Orlando

True Love.
Marnie Schulenburg and Zack Robidas, who play the lovers Rosalind and Orlando, are married in real life and have been together for 11 years.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

London is the New Troy

Every culture has an origin story; a narrative that explains how a nation of people settled down and answers the fundamental questions of existence. How did we get here? These myths were often passed down through traditional storytelling, perhaps with some basis in historical truth.

Elizabethan England certainly did not lack dramatic origin stories. Shakespeare's history plays are based on real people, places, and events that Shakespeare uses to dramatize England's journey into a nation ruled by Queen Elizabeth I.

However, medieval England believed in another origin story: that London was once called "Troynovant" or "New Troy" and that Englishmen were the direct descendants of Aeneas, one of the respected heroes of the Trojan War.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's 12th century chronicle Historia Regum Britanniae, Brutus was the name of the first King of Britain. According to legend, Brutus is the great-grandson of Aeneas who travels to Greece and comes upon a group of Trojan refugees who have been enslaved by the Greeks. Brutus becomes their leader and forces the Greek king to let them go. Brutus and his Trojan refugees then sail away to find a new homeland. After sailing by North Africa and Gaul, they finally hear about the island of Albion, where giants live. King Brutus defeats the giants on Albion and builds a city along the river Thames, which becomes "Troia Nova" (New Troy). After Brutus' twenty-four year reign as the first King of Britain, he divides the island up amongst his three sons who become the patriarchs of England, Scotland, and Wales. Only much later, according to this legend, does the city of Troynovant get renamed to London.

While this myth gave Elizabethans a direct connection to the heroes of classical literature, there was another reason why they were obsessed with the story of the fall of Troy. According to tradition, Troy was a city of merchants. If Troy fell, and London was "New Troy," what did that mean to the growing class of merchants in London who were becoming more powerful than the older, feudal aristocrats of England?

Shakespeare wrote his plays during uncertain political times. Queen Elizabeth not only faced challenges from abroad with the Spanish Armada, but from within as members of the old aristocracy thought they could outmaneuver a woman. One such challenger was the Earl of Essex, who was known as "England's Achilles."

The Earl of Essex had an extremely antagonistic relationship with the Queen, as his chivalric beliefs about knighthood did not align with the reality of a female monarch. Not only did Essex secretly correspond with Spain and Scotland to undermine her succession to the throne, but he also made openly disrespectful remarks about her physical appearance. While most courtiers praised Elizabeth for her beauty, hoping for her favor, the Earl of Essex publicly insulted her as an "aging woman." Queen Elizabeth I, however, held her ground in these public quarrels and would sometimes bestow favors on the Earl of Essex, only to take them away.

In response, the Earl of Essex tried to stir up a nationalist movement to become the savior of English interests in Ireland against the Irish leader the Earl of Tyrone. In 1591, Essex took it upon himself to dub twenty-one knights at the siege of Rouen, and continued to gain followers. Over the next decade, Essex dubbed so many knights, making them swear allegiance directly to him, it became difficult for Elizabeth to revoke titles from all Essex's men.

In 1598, as Shakespeare began writing *Henry V, Hamlet*, and *As You Like It*, the Earl of Essex led his loyal knights on an unsuccessful military campaign in Ireland. It's possible that this approaching war was personally significant for Shakespeare, as his wife's younger brother John was conscripted into the military and recorded on the muster rolls, although it's not certain if John was sent to fight Spanish forces or on Essex's Irish campaign.

Of course, a wealthy Earl can make promises to his countrymen that he will bring back the glory days of English knighthood, but those promises didn't hold up well in the woods and bogs of Ireland. After Essex put on a big ceremonial show in Dublin on St. George's Day in 1599, he led four thousand foot soldiers and five hundred cavalry through the Irish countryside, looking for a fight. The Irish, seeing this pageantry, decided to keep the English on the move, drawing them deeper into the Irish countryside, and avoiding conflicts. After a length of time, young Englishmen, anxious for glory through battle, started a series of foolish maneuvers. Tempers flared. Some grew bored and went back home to England. Essex had promised these men military glory, but had no plan. Rumors began to make their way back to London and Queen Elizabeth's court. Keeping men on the battlefield indefinitely was expensive.

Essex had organized one of the largest forces to fight the Irish, yet it only led to a series of inconclusive battles. He returned to England in disgrace. Queen Elizabeth soon stripped him of his office and put him under house arrest.

Essex continued to lose all his wealth and power and when he was released in 1601, he began organizing a

conspiracy against Elizabeth. He stirred up followers who were upset with Elizabeth's reign. Then, he sought out the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's acting company, and offered to pay them 40 shillings more if they would perform a special production of *Richard II*, in which an English monarch is deposed. That plan was quickly discovered and Essex then led a hasty rebellion of about 200 people against the Queen. He was arrested, charged as a traitor, and beheaded in February 1601 in the Tower of London.

Shakespeare's *Troilus & Cressida* was written shortly after the Essex uprising. His acting company was shaken up by interrogations, as they narrowly avoided involvement in Essex's plans against the Queen. As a writer, Shakespeare would have to be careful not to take sides, but the play expresses discontent with fighting a long, pointless, meaningless war.

While it can be said of many of Shakespeare's plays that their foreign location is a substitute for Elizabethan London, setting his next play in Troy certainly was an easily recognizable metaphor for his contemporary audiences. After all, Essex was England's Achilles.

Since the story of the Trojan War was familiar to every Elizabethan schoolboy who learned Latin by translating passages of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, Shakespeare takes the advantage by starting in the middle of the war, where both sides are stalled. Men on both sides are impatient, looking for some opportunity to declare a clear winner so they can all go home. By Act II, the Greeks offer the Trojans an olive branch—give the famous beauty who started this whole war, Helen of Troy, back and we can all go home.

The Trojans are tempted to take this offer. But will they? Enter Troilus the Trojan, a young soldier in love. Shakespeare turns this war play into a love story, where Troilus is more Romeo then Henry V. We meet Troilus ready to discard his armor because he's wounded by Cupid's arrow over Cressida. Forget Helen of Troy—Troilus can't live without his beautiful Cressida.

Shakespeare always finds the humanity in these classical characters and surprises the audience with new insights about human nature. In his plays, we meet wise fools and foolish advisors. Shakespeare could have followed the Western literary tradition, like Chaucer, of siding with the Trojans as the more romantic heroes while the Greeks are the boorish antagonists. Instead, Shakespeare shows us both sides of the battlefield, finding drama and passion in all of these soldiers as flawed humans with petty foibles. And somehow, Shakespeare even finds comedy in this long, unrelenting war.

In the end, we experience a play where Greeks and Trojans act and behave more like Shakespeare's contemporaries than their classical counterparts. Elizabethan knights on the battlefield are just dressed in Trojan clothes. Even the characters are aware that this Trojan War will make them famous one day, and their behavior will be under scrutiny many generations later. However, that doesn't stop them from scheming, teasing, flirting, plotting, whining, conniving, and generally showing the worst of human nature. The fool Thersites, on the Greek side, watches this bad behavior with glee.

While time creates a sense of historical distance with the Trojan War, Shakespeare shows us a side of the Trojan War that's uncertain, dangerous and even absurd. Shakespeare still gives some hope to hold onto, in the midst of interminable war, two people can fall in love. And perhaps, as Shakespeare shows us his version of the Trojan War, we can gain some insights to the larger questions: how did we get here, on this battlefield, and what can we learn from these ancient characters? ■

By Heather Helinsky, dramaturg

No director, no designers... Just great actors

For this production, there are no directors or designers in the conventional sense. The actors arrive with their lines learned, stage the play, and open after a few days of rehearsal, bringing us one step closer to the excitement and spontaneity experienced in an Elizabethan playhouse.

Mairin Lee
Cressida

Brandon J. Pierce
Troilus

Lindsay Smiling
Agamemnon

Luigi Sotille
Hector

Susan Riley Stevens
Thersites

Greg Wood
Ulysses

Schubert Theatre
July 26 thru Aug 6

She's without father, lover, or money, so by changing her outward appearance, she can take actions to save herself.

Yet, Rosalind constantly transforms between her masculine persona of "Ganymede" and her female emotions. Part of the joyous comedy of the play is watching her transformation.

The audience experiences the irony of knowing Rosalind is both in control and not in control of her behavior. She performs in one moment, yet under the spell of love in the next. She appears to act like many of Shakespeares's strong-willed women, yet is also incredibly vulnerable and conflicted. As an audience, we witness the power of transformation: how Rosalind transforms herself and at the same time the Forest of Arden transforms her.

Esau Pritchett
Duke Frederick, Duke Senior

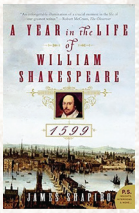
Ian Merrill Peakes
Jaques

Shakespeare also magically transforms the Forest of Arden to suit his own purposes. Sometimes it is brutal winter, other times, gentle spring when Shakespeare needs to introduce a pair of lovers. Even the trees are from different environments: sometimes it's an old oak, other times it's a palm tree—and these trees are covered in poetry. There are both deer and lions in this forest. Pastures for sheep and deserts for snakes. There's so much in this forest, it's as if the Forest of Arden is a theatre itself, keeping the stagehands busy shifting scenery.

Perhaps this play is more like the road between London and Shakespeare's hometown. Shakespeare is in the middle of his career, the middle of his life, dealing with aging parents and growing teenage daughters. As a Londoner, he's shed his youthful country persona and applied for a family coat of arms, to continue his career as a gentleman. Perhaps that's why he needs the satire of Jaques and the clownish behavior of Touchstone to take the audience through the seven stages of life that we all march through: the infant, the schoolboy, the lover, the soldier, the justice, the pantalone, and the old man. It's not just these stages of life that Shakespeare dramatizes, but the stages in-between each. Rosalind may try to school Orlando in what it means to be a lover, but what are the bumps and obstacles and underbrush in the way to get from one state to the other?

On this journey, Shakespeare takes us to one of the spaces of his English childhood: the magical forest and hard country life. Yet, he does not present it with any kind of romantic or nostalgic lens like the rest of his contemporaries: the forest can be brutal, the road can be long, and the wildlife different from civilization. Those who do well at court may struggle in the politics of the forest. Yet, the mixture of civilization and wildness provides an opportunity for imagination, creativity, and witty humor: here in the forest, with a hodgepodge of country and city folk, Shakespeare's poetry soars over the trees.

And for director Matt Pfeiffer, who has changed much over the past nineteen years working at the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, *As You Like It* is an opportunity to explore all of life's transitions, from his youthful understanding of Shakespeare's plays to his current musical aesthetic choices. As he returns from a busy season directing in center city Philadelphia, escaping for the summer to the pastoral beauty of Center Valley, what new discoveries will be found in Shakespeare's poetry this time? "It feels like a great time," says Pfeiffer, "to offer an audience a chance to grapple with time, age, and ultimately the ways in which we love; from frivolity, to raw desire, to life-altering love—it's all in there." ■



Source: For more on Shakespeare in 1599, reference James Shapiro's landmark book: *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.

PSF Welcomes New Members to the Board

Composed of volunteers from around the region, PSF's Board of Directors serve as community representatives that support the company's mission and administration. PSF is proud to welcome four new board members: James A. Bartholomew, Thomas S. Lubben, Andy McIntyre, and Stefanie B. Wexler.

"We have long been blessed with a caring, engaged, and insightful Board of Directors," says Patrick Mulcahy, producing artistic director. "That tradition continues with our newest members and we thank them for joining in promoting the good work of the Festival."

James A. Bartholomew, Esquire is an attorney and shareholder with the law firm of Fitzpatrick Lentz & Bubba of Center Valley, Pennsylvania. He concentrates his practice in estate planning, estate and trust administration, and business law and served as Solicitor of the Southern Lehigh School District for more than 35 years. He has served as a past Board Member of the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and Chair of its Endowment Committee and as past Board Member and President of the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra and Chair of its Endowment Fund.

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FR. GERARD J. SCHUBERT, OSFS (1929 - 2015)
Founder

Thomas S. Lubben, EdD is the CEO and Founder of TLC Arts Schools, LLC. This is a non-profit organization aimed at the creation of (charter) art schools for children of all ages. He is responsible for the creation of the Charter Arts High School in Bethlehem, the Arts Academy Charter Middle School in Salisbury, and the Allentown Arts Academy Elementary Charter School. These schools currently provide services for over 1,200 students in the Lehigh Valley. He serves as an Elder at First Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem and currently lives with his wife, Carole, in Northampton, PA. Father Schubert was always his mentor and role model.

Andy McIntyre has been at Computer Aid, Inc. since 1989 serving initially as Controller and then as Chief Financial Officer. During his tenure, Computer Aid has grown significantly from a regional IT services provider to a global enterprise. McIntyre's experience includes several acquisitions and the establishment of subsidiaries and joint ventures in several countries. Andy was previously employed by Price Waterhouse and served as a Captain in the United States Army. He received his B.S. in Accounting and MBA from Lehigh University.

Stefanie B. Wexler is the Vice President for Integration at Evonik Corporation. She joined Evonik with their acquisition of the specialty chemical business of Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. where she was the Vice President and General Manager for the Additives Business. Stefanie is active in her parish, and the Lehigh Valley community. She is currently a member of the Kutztown University College of Business Advisory Board, and on the executive committee of St. Joseph the Worker School Board. Stefanie and her husband Keith are longtime supporters of PSF.

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