

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

by William Shakespeare

Each summer, in the time between their involvement in multiple other productions, PSF's Young Company comes together to create a Shakespeare project. This developmental project gives them hands-on experience with Shakespeare's text in performance with intensive text work from an experienced director. Despite the Festival taking an intermission season, our wonderful Young Company felt compelled to find a way to share their work and move forward with this project. Here are a few facts and tidbits on Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

CHARACTERS

Valentine & Proteus: the "two gentlemen of Verona"

Julia: Proteus' first love

Silvia: the daughter of the Duke of Milan

Thurio: chosen to marry Silvia

Speed, Launce, Panthino, and Lucetta: servants

Antonio: Proteus' father

The Outlaws

HISTORY

- Written between 1592-1594
- One of Shakespeare's earliest plays (probably his first comedy)
- Shakespeare was 28 years old in 1592
- Experimented with some conventions that would be later used in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*
- There are no records of this play being performed before 1762 but it is assumed to have been produced during Shakespeare's lifetime
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was the first play presented at the new Globe in London in 1996

THE PLOT

Valentine and Proteus are best friends living in Verona. Valentine wants to travel and see the world, but Proteus is in love with Julia and doesn't want to leave town. Valentine makes fun of his friend for his lovesick behavior, but as soon as he arrives in Milan he falls in love with the Duke's daughter, Silvia, who is unfortunately already engaged to a man the Duke picked out for her: Thurio.

Back in Verona, Proteus' father, Antonio, convinces Proteus to join Valentine in Milan, and Proteus finds himself leaving Julia behind with a special ring and a promise to be true. When in Milan, he sees Silvia and immediately falls in love with her. He plans to double cross his best friend, giving himself a clear shot at Silvia. Valentine divulges his plan to run off with Silvia to Proteus, who reveals his plan to the Duke, who then banishes Valentine from Milan. Silvia refuses advances from Proteus and berates him for being unfaithful to Julia.

Meanwhile Julia, missing her Proteus, disguises herself as a man, goes to Milan offering herself as a servant to Proteus, and witnesses his unfaithfulness first hand. Valentine, meanwhile, has been captured by outlaws in the forest. Silvia flees into the forest after Valentine; and Proteus, Julia, and Thurio follow. Proteus saves Silvia from the outlaws and demands her love as repayment. He is on the point of ravaging her when Valentine stops him. Proteus apologizes and Valentine forgives him. Julia faints at the series of events and her identity is revealed. The Duke and Thurio arrive captured by the outlaws. Valentine is pardoned and ends up with Silvia, while Proteus takes back Julia.

Geographical Fun Fact:
In the play, Shakespeare mentions that Valentine departs from Verona to Milan by boat. However, both Milan and Verona are inland cities. When Launce arrives in Milan, Speed greets him saying, "Welcome to Padua!" ... but Padua is 52 miles from Verona in the wrong direction. So either Shakespeare failed Italian geography or just didn't care!

