

STATE ED

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)

BY ADAM LONG, DANIEL SINGER AND JESS WINFIELD



**STATE SA
THEATRE
COMPANY**

DIRECTOR *Adam Cook* **DESIGNER** *Ailsa Paterson* **LIGHTING DESIGNER** *Ben Flett*
COMPOSER *Stuart Day* **CAST** *Damian Callinan, Nic English and Tim Overton*
DURATION *Approx 135 minutes* **SUITABLE FOR** *Years 9 - 12*

Table of Contents

Cast/Creative Team	4
Playwrights	5
<i>Adam Long</i>	5
<i>Daniel Singer</i>	5
<i>Jess Winfield</i>	6
About The Play	7
<i>Excerpt from Shakespeare in Neon Colors</i>	7
<i>Pop Culture Allusion</i>	8
From The Director	9
Actor Profiles	10
<i>Damian Callinan</i>	10
<i>Nic English</i>	11
<i>Tim Overton</i>	11
Synopsis	12
The Characters	13
The Language	13
About William Shakespeare	14
The Works of William Shakespeare	16
The Globe Theatre	16
Forms and Conventions	17
<i>Conventions of Shakespearean Comedy</i>	17
<i>Improvitational Theatre</i>	17
Interesting Reading	18
<i>The Reduced Shakespeare Company</i>	18
Set Design	19
<i>Ailsa Paterson</i>	19
Essay Questions	22
<i>English Questions</i>	22
<i>Drama Questions</i>	23
<i>Design</i>	23
<i>Performance</i>	23
Immediate Reactions	24
Design Roles	25
Further Resources	26
<i>Shakespeare Study</i>	26
<i>Theatrical Comedy and Improvisation</i>	26
<i>Web Links*</i>	26
<i>References</i>	26

State Theatre Company of South Australia presents

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)

BY ADAM LONG, DANIEL SINGER & JESS WINFIELD

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

ENSEMBLE

Damian Callinan

Nic English

Tim Overton

DIRECTOR

Adam Cook

DESIGNER

Alisa Paterson

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Ben Flett

COMPOSER

Stuart Day



Playwrights

ADAM LONG

Founding Member/Writer/Performer



Before “falling into” the business of Shakespearean performance, which he deemed only a hobby, Adam Long was an accountant, musician, and stand-up comic. However, of the original three, he stuck it out the longest, not leaving Reduced Shakespeare Company (RSC) until he had delivered Ophelia’s modified line “I’m out of my tiny little mind” more times than even he could count. His particular specialties were Shakespeare’s women, all of whom were said to “look alike and suffer from indigestion,” (Gussow). In defense of the Winfield, Singer, Long paring down of Shakespeare, he cites a poem by Allen Ginsberg: “I saw the best minds of my generation/ Destroyed by madness / Starving, hysterical, naked; / Dragging themselves through the negro / Streets at dawn / Looking for an angry fix” (*Howl, Kaddish and Other Poems* [London, Penguin, 2009]). “I knew,” continued Long, “that we weren’t [really] the best minds of our generation, but we were starving and hysterical. And we often went without clothes” (Writer’s Notes, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*). Long went solo as a writer and director in 2003; he has since abridged another’s distinguished canon, the works of Charlie Dickens, or Dickens Unplugged.

DANIEL SINGER

RSC Founder/Writer/Performer



In 1981, inspired by Stoppard’s *The Dogg’s Troupe* 15-minute Hamlet, Daniel Singer, an American and recent student of drama at the Guildford School near London, dreamed up the outline of what was to become *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. Singer held auditions for his amateur production, which initially was just a half-hour Hamlet and a much reduced *Romeo and Juliet* (proudly performed in Mall courtyards). Singer, along with Adam Long and Jess Borgeson, who later changed his name to Winfield, emerged as the primary performers, eventual founders of the Reduced Shakespeare Company (RSC), and co-authors of the world’s most condensed Complete Works, clocking in at a dizzying ninety-seven minutes. They “juggled Shakespeare’s plays as if they were hot coals,” showcasing their stopwatch performances world-wide, from Washington D.C., to London’s West End, to Israel, Malta and Bermuda” (Mel Gussow, *The Essential Shakespeare, as You Might Like It, in Two Hours* [Theatre Review: New York Times, 1991]). Miraculously, “instead of pooh-poohing this preposterous attempt by three eternally adolescent American[s] . . . the critics went wild with admiration” (Cavendish). However young at the time of the RSC’s inception, Daniel Singer was no novice to theatre ingenuity; at the age of eighteen he co-founded the General Amazement Theatre in Santa Rosa, California, which produced three plays, including Singer’s own musical adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*. Though he started the mad ball rolling, Singer was the first to flee the fast lane of “Bardian abridgment.” In 1989 he left RSC and went to work as an Imagineer at Walt Disney; here, among other things, he helped design mini-theme parks Splash Mountain, Toontown, and Indiana Jones. Singer also helped organise another acting troupe, The Flower Street Players, for which he co-produced six plays, as well as directed and starred in *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

Playwrights

JESS WINFIELD

Founding Member/Writer/Performer



Perhaps the most outspoken of the three, Jess Winfield (because no one could pronounce Borgeson) theorised that “every theatre-goer, deep in his heart, wants to see Shakespeare ripped to shreds; we fulfil that fantasy” (Entertainment Tonight, Weekly Edition, July 2, 1989). He must have assumed that the populace felt similarly about James Joyce, for Winfield has since satirically reduced Joyce’s great work *Ulysses*: Jam Joy Yes, his self-proclaimed personal best. After resigning from Reduced Shakespeare Company (RSC), he too, went to work for the magical world of Disney, earning two daytime Emmy awards for his work on the television series *Teacher’s Pet* starring Nathan Lane and Jerry Stiller. He has also worked on feature films, including *Leroy & Stitch! The Movie*. In 2008, he wrote *My Name is Will: A Novel of Sex, Drugs and Shakespeare*. During their illustrious collaboration, Winfield, Singer, and Long displayed supreme confidence in Master Will’s good humour; when asked to conjecture what the orthodox playwright would think of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, Jess Winfield confidently replied “Shakespeare would not only approve of their play, he would go bowling with them after the performance” (America’s Talking Network, “Break a Leg, with Bill McCuddy,” 1995). Still, however devoutly these men practice the belief that “brevity is the soul of wit,” their acts of abridgment, at least as far as the great Shakespeare is concerned, are not without some conscience: “the deed is done,” Adam Long softly laments. “May the Bard forgive us” (*The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)*, xxii).

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About The Play

In August of 1981 a few young performers set out to create a half-hour version of Hamlet for the Novato California Renaissance Pleasure Faire. In the originator, Daniel Singer's own words: "the result was far more comical than I had originally planned. Our venue was hot, dusty, noisy, and full of distractions. Holding an audience's attention was unusually challenging. Drunken hecklers, intrusive parades, and backstage confusion forced us to improvise bits . . . which constantly improved as our schtick evolved." These conditions are reminiscent of what many scholars imagine the young William Shakespeare himself would have faced travelling through Renaissance England and later in his own Globe Theatre on the South Bank of London. From these challenging circumstances came two performances, 400 years and an ocean apart, that share timeless comedic elements: actor to audience interaction, limited use of scenery, contemporary allusions and, of course cross-dressing. Since its inception during the 1980s, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* has been seen on stages across the world, with a decade-long run on London's West End. The script is reworked and redeveloped at every one of its productions, thereby remaining uniquely contemporary and delightful to every one of its audiences.

EXCERPT FROM SHAKESPEARE IN NEON COLORS

By Olga A. Pilkington

For full text visit <http://www.uop.edu.jo/download/research/members/CompleteGuide.pdf>

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) is an hilarious adaptation of the Bard's thirty-seven plays presented with even more hilarious scholarly commentaries by the author of "I Love My Willy" and "one of America's preeminent Shakespearean scholars" who while at the University of California at Berkeley "read two books about William Shakespeare" (Long, Singer, Winfield, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* [New York: Applause, 1987], 8). Watching this play is perhaps similar to flipping channels on a Saturday night—one minute it's a melodrama, the next a history program followed by a cooking show, and finally, nothing like a good game of football to complete the evening. John Lariviere claims that this play is capable of "turning an evening of Shakespeare into something out of Saturday Night Live" (<http://www.talkinbroadway.com/regional/sfla/sfla219.html>, March 26, 2009).

The play will delight everyone—those audience members who barely know who Shakespeare is and which state he is from (Utah, of course) and those who have committed to memory every line the Bard ever wrote. The audience members will walk away from the theatre having discovered such truths as, "Comedies aren't half as funny as the tragedies" (Long, Singer, Winfield, 36) or Shakespeare "dictated to his secretary, Rudolf Hess, the work *Mein Kampf* (12) and followed that up with a play on the effects of nuclear energy on the Soviet Union—"Chernobyl Kinsmen" (39).

While *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* is full of slapstick comedy and bawdy jokes in the worst traditions of Shakespeare himself, it also points out some amusing facts about the Bard's writings which even real scholars will be able to laugh about. *The Complete Works of William*

Shakespeare (Abridged) discusses how Shakespeare “‘distilled’ the three or four funniest gimmicks of his time, and milked them into sixteen plays” (33). *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* promptly corrects Shakespeare’s wordiness by taking “the liberty of condensing all sixteen of Shakespeare’s comedies into a single play” (33). And, of course, what discussion of the Bard’s genius can bypass the authorship question? *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* offers its own “groundbreaking” theory (41). The play also delves into the depths of Hamlet. After watching *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, the audience will develop doubts about whether or not this is really the longest of Shakespeare’s plays. After all, *The Complete Works* presents Hamlet not once, not twice, but three times. In addition to this, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* “is notable for holding the (self-proclaimed) world record for the shortest-ever performance of Hamlet, clocking in at 43 seconds” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Complete_Works_of_William_Shakespeare_\(abridged\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Complete_Works_of_William_Shakespeare_(abridged))) March 26, 2009).

Some might be surprised to find out that *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company. However, it was not the Royal Shakespeare Company that originated the show. Reduced Shakespeare Company’s founder, Daniel Singer, wrote the play. The company describes itself as “a three-man comedy troupe known for taking long, serious subjects and reducing them into short, sharp comedies” (<http://www.reducedshakespeare.com/>). In fact, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* was Reduced Shakespeare Company’s first show.

The ninety-seven minute show began with a 1981 twenty-five minute version of Hamlet written by Singer. The show premiered at a California Renaissance fair but wasn’t a success until “Three weeks into the run of the production . . . one of the actresses broke her ankle. It was after she was replaced with a man in drag named Adam Long that the show developed a large following” (Lariviere).

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POP CULTURE ALLUSION

The play contains a number of allusions to pop culture, items or ideas of common or popular knowledge, usually very current, mentioned but not actually explained or explored within the text as the author presumes the reader will understand the connection. Within *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* these allusions are used for comedic effect. This show has developed through improvisation over more than twenty years. Though some sections, like Hamlet, have remained almost unchanged, other sections, like the football scene, have been adapted to suit popular media as well as the various locations of the production. (It has been portrayed as a rugby, soccer, or Aussie Rules footy.) While the script published by Applause Books in 1994 was replete with references to Ronald Regan and Chernobyl, the most recent authorized script copy, which the Utah Shakespearean Festival 2009 production uses, includes updated references to the following: The View, iPod, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, Barack Obama, LOL, and Desperate Housewives.

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From The Director

ADAM COOK

Director



What kind of theatrical work can we do at the State Theatre Company?

Not so much what should we do as what could we do? It's a perennial question for me. In the eight years I was the Artistic Director at State Theatre Company we produced a very broad range of plays - the most accessible kinds of comedy, but also plays that are deeply emotional, tough, confronting as well as formally innovative. I'll always provide a fair amount of "meat on the bone" in any season, as well as the occasional piece of fluff like the one you're going to see tonight!

Who's afraid of William Shakespeare? Many, many people think of his work as inaccessible and elitist. "I hate Shakespeare" is a phrase I've often heard. Personally I've always been a Bardolator, a signed up fan from my teenage years. If you've seen a good production of a Shakespeare play, I don't think you'd still hate him. I reckon bad productions are to blame, and the received idea that his language is Willfully [sic] difficult.

This project came out of an impulse to do a show that exploded beyond the proscenium arch and out into the auditorium, that not only courted the audience's favour, but asked it out on a date and then hit on it! We also performing this play during the ComeOut Festival in South Australia, so for daytime shows we're more likely to try to buy the audience a milkshake and suggest we hold hands. I think this play is a great way to invite you all to explore the world of Shakespeare without being afraid of it, or worse, bored by it.

This play is now over twenty years old, and has enjoyed success in the USA (where it was first performed) and throughout the world. It's easy to see why it continues to have a long life, as Shakespeare's plays are always ripe material for parody. While it's irreverent, silly, and hugely energetic, at its heart is a celebration of Shakespeare - his famous stories, the blistering and gruesome violence, the love, the death, the struggles for power, and the wonderful language.

It's a play full of sight gags, groaning puns, and very broad acting. It's meant to be rough and vulgar, and very, very silly. To use a malapropism that came out of rehearsals one day, "it ain't rocket surgery"! But to call it a no-brainer would be to undervalue the skill and panache with which our trio of actors deploy their endlessly inventive armory of comic effects.

The production's inspired by medieval travelling theatres, a bit of the Child Catcher's cart from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and - clearly! - that august ambulatory gastronomic institution, The Pie Cart, as well as the many-splendoured buskers of Rundle Mall in Adelaide.

It's quick, easy and good for you - but only because it'll make you laugh. So, take your medicine and then I hope you'll say - "For this light relief, much thanks!"

Actor Profiles



DAMIAN CALLINAN

Ensemble

Damian is an award-winning standup comic, TV sketch show performer, broadcaster, actor and writer. He is best known to TV audiences for his roles on *Skithouse*, *Before The Game* and *Comedy Slapdown* as well as guest appearances on shows such as *Spicks and Specks*, *Melbourne Comedy Festival Gala*, *The Great Debate* and *City Homicide*.

In 2010 he received a third nomination for the prestigious Barry Award at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for *The Merger* (his 10th solo show), which he toured nationally in 2011/12/13. He has just completed a regional SA tour of his new show *Roadtrip* and a national tour of *The Cave the Rave – A Comedy Dance Lesson*, which saw him win the ABN Amro Foreign Exchange Award to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe. He is soon to appear in *Backyard Ashes* fulfilling an ambition to star in a feature film shot entirely in Wagga Wagga.

Damian has performed in three previous productions of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* including two seasons at the Sydney Opera House, and also appeared alongside Nathan O’Keefe and Mark Saturno in State Theatre Company’s 2011 production and tour.

1. *What is your process as an actor, when preparing a character for performance?*

In a production such as TCWOWS(A) the process of developing characters is quite different to creating a single character. Each of us is playing multiple characters from a range of Shakespeare’s plays so we have to be mindful of not doubling up types. There is no “deep” thought put into the character choices. For instance at the first read, I used a “cine-sound newsreel” voice for Laertes in Hamlet which everyone laughed at. I stuck with it and it got funnier, particularly when delivering his dying words in the same sing-song, chipper, public school lad way. As a result Laertes costume was changed and he now wears a Biggles flying hat and goggles.

When creating characters in my own work, particularly for multi-character solo shows, the process is quite different. As I write the characters I am not only mindful of the voice and physical mannerisms but more importantly their role in the story; how they relate to the other characters and what is their arc? My most recent solo show *The Merger* was a sequel in which some characters reappeared. This led to subtle shifts in the characters as time altered them. One of these characters had begun initially as a comic juxtaposition: a bogan footy player who is culturally aware. However that fusion of stereotypes gave birth to a much more complex character than I had imagined and I have now based two full narrative shows around him.

2. *Given the improvisational nature of this production and the audience participation required, how do you prepare for this during the rehearsal period and prior to each performance?*

Improvisation is very much part of our rehearsal process, however, the improvisations that work are worked into the script. There comes a time when the piece has to settle. However there are certain times and places where we can expect that we might depart from the script and we have to be ready for something different to happen. When the fourth wall is kicked down, as it is in this show, we have to expect that sometimes the unexpected will occur.

You can’t prepare specifically for these moments but you can practice the art of letting the script breathe. I am a stand-up with an improv background so I am attracted to this show for that reason. No two shows are ever exactly the same.

Actor Profiles

3. *What challenges have you faced during the rehearsal process and how have you overcome them?*

Having performed this play before, I have to be mindful about not being the “know it” guy. It’s important that the cast find their own way and discover new things. Sometimes I have piped up when we get to a hurdle that I know has been a stumbling block in the past or if I have added something that has worked in the past that seems to fit again, but it has been nice to have new discoveries with this cast. It’s amazing also what a difference the director and designers have made in charting the course of this production.

4. *What do you think school audiences will enjoy from this production?*

The students will be surprised by the amount of interaction with the audience. While this is controlled by the cast, the school audiences will go away with questions about how much was scripted and how much was improvised. Having performed this play in front of school groups before, I know that the piece is extremely accessible. We have also laced the script with countless contemporary references which are aimed at Gen Y audiences.

NIC ENGLISH

Ensemble

Nic graduated from AC Arts in 2008. Since graduating, Nic’s theatre credits include *Books and Bites* (Come Out), *The Embryos* (The Duende Collective), *Different Fields* (SINGular Productions/State Opera of South Australia), *Autobahn*, *Boxing Day Test* and *The Call* (Junglebean) and *The Misanthrope*, *Holding The Man* and *The Glass Menagerie* (State Theatre Company). Screen credits include *One Eyed Girl* and *Wolf Creek 2* as well as short films *Being Nowhere* and *Pale Blue Light*. Nic has also developed new works with Sydney based companies Cry Havoc and The Earthcrosser Company, as well as New York based ensemble, Chopt Logic. Nic is a founding member of Adelaide theatre company Junglebean.



TIM OVERTON

Ensemble

Tim graduated from the Adelaide College of the Arts in 2008. Since graduating, Tim’s theatre credits include: *Autobahn*, *Two*, *Boxing Day Test* and *The Call* (Junglebean), *Almost An Evening* and *A State of Affairs* (Accidental Productions), *The Fastest Boy in the World*, *Mr. McGee and the Biting Flee*, *Little Green Tractor*, *Emily Loves To Bounce*, *Me and My Shadow* (winner of the 2011 Helpmann Award for best children’s presentation) and *Cranky Bear* (Patch Theatre Company), *Buried Child* (State Theatre Company of South Australia) and *Shakespeare On Love* (South Australia Shakespeare Company). Tim’s screen credits include the short film *Riding Derrick* and SBS series *Danger 5*. Last year Tim was nominated for the Adelaide Critic’s Circle Award for best performance from an emerging artist in Junglebean’s production of *The Call*. Tim is a founding member of Adelaide based theatre company Junglebean and a proud member of Equity since 2008.



Synopsis

Can three guys really cover thirty-seven Shakespeare plays in less than two hours? This fast-firing comedy does just that as it parodies all of the Shakespeare plays (plus the sonnets!) with only three performers in two acts. This play is full of energy as the characters run across the stage and keep you guessing how they will pull off the next play. Clever use of some interesting costumes also adds to the fun. The play starts with an eccentric version of *Romeo and Juliet*, followed by a parody of *Titus Andronicus* (which is portrayed as a cooking show). Next is *Othello*, which is done as a rap song (the infamous “Othello Rap”). The members of the trio compete in a hilarious football game which summarises the histories (*King John*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV* etc), complete with commentary and details of each character’s rise and fall from power. As the characters are about to come to the end of the first act, they realise they forgot to perform *Hamlet*. One of the actors becomes nervous and runs out of the theatre with another actor chasing him. The final actor is left to entertain the audience by himself, which he does by telling jokes and calling for the intermission. After the intermission, the missing two actors return and save their companion from reciting all of the sonnets. All three actors then perform their very abbreviated version of *Hamlet* (with a little help from the audience), thus “completing” the canon in only two hours!



The Characters

It would be impossible to list and describe all the characters in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. After all, three actors portray the characters in all thirty-seven of Shakespeare's plays in about ninety minutes! *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* was first performed by the authors (Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Borgeson) on June 19, 1987. The three performers used their own first names. They advise actors in all subsequent performances to substitute their own names for "Adam," "Jess," and "Daniel." The script further specifies which Shakespeare character each actor is portraying, but there are far too many to list! Knowledge about Shakespeare's works is helpful, but not necessary. All that's really necessary is "a willing suspension of disbelief" and the ability to not take Shakespeare too seriously, as you laugh at him, his characters, the actors, and (sometimes) yourself.

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The Language

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) contains several substantial sections of Shakespeare's actual text as well as highly condensed retellings of the Bard's tales. This makes for an exciting mixture of language within the play.

Famous Lines by Shakespeare:

"All the world's a stage."

—As You Like It, 2.7.140

"Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?"

—Romeo and Juliet, 2.2.33

"One who loved not wisely, but too well."

—Othello, 5.2.344

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears."

—Julius Caesar, 3.2.73

"A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse."

—Richard III, 5.4.7

"To be or not to be, that is the question."

—Hamlet, 3.1.55

Paraphrased Lines from Shakespeare:

"A nose by any other name would still smell."

—Romeo and Juliet, 2.2.43–44

"To sleep perchance to snooze."

—Hamlet, 3.1.64

About William Shakespeare

For all his fame and celebration, William Shakespeare remains a mysterious figure. There are just two primary sources for information on the Bard: his works and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Naturally, there are many gaps in this body of information, which tells us little about Shakespeare the man.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, allegedly on April 23, 1564. Church records from Holy Trinity Church indicate that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household—three of whom died in childhood. John Shakespeare had a remarkable run of success as a merchant, and later as an alderman and high bailiff of Stratford, during William’s early childhood. His fortunes declined, however, in the 1570s.

There is great conjecture about Shakespeare’s childhood years, especially regarding his education. It is surmised by scholars that Shakespeare attended the free grammar school in Stratford, which at the time had a reputation to rival Eton. While there are no records extant to prove this claim, Shakespeare’s knowledge of Latin and classical Greek would tend to support this theory. In addition, Shakespeare’s first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, wrote that John Shakespeare had placed William “for some time in a free school.” John Shakespeare, as a Stratford official, would have been granted a waiver of tuition for his son. As the records do not exist, we do not know how long William attended the school, but certainly the literary quality of his works suggest a solid education. What is certain is that William Shakespeare never proceeded to university schooling, which has stirred some of the debate concerning the authorship of his works.

The next documented event in Shakespeare’s life is his marriage to Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. William was 18 at the time, and Anne was 26—and pregnant. Their first daughter, Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583. The couple later had twins, Hamnet and Judith, born February 2, 1585, and christened at Holy Trinity Church. Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11.

For seven years, William Shakespeare effectively disappears from all records, turning up in London circa 1592. This period of Shakespeare’s life has sparked much controversy. Rowe notes that young Shakespeare was quite fond of poaching, and may have had to flee Stratford after an incident with Sir Thomas Lucy, whose lands he allegedly hunted. There is also rumour of Shakespeare working as an assistant schoolmaster in Lancashire for a time, though this is circumstantial at best. It is estimated that Shakespeare arrived in London around 1588 and began to establish himself as an actor and playwright. Evidently, Shakespeare inspired envy early on for his talent, as related by the critical attack of Robert Greene, a London playwright, in 1592: “...an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger’s heart wrapped in a player’s hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.”

Greene's bombast notwithstanding, Shakespeare must have shown considerable promise. By 1594, he was not only acting and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the ascension of James I in 1603), but was a managing partner in the operation as well. With Will Kempe, a master comedian, and Richard Burbage, a leading tragic actor of the day, the Lord Chamberlain's Men became a favourite London troupe, patronized by royalty and made popular by the theatre-going public. When the plague forced theatre closings in the mid-1590s, Shakespeare and his company made plans for the Globe Theatre in the Bankside district, which was across the river from London proper. Shakespeare's success is apparent when studied against other playwrights of this age. His company was the most successful in London in his day. He had plays published and sold in octavo editions, or "penny-copies," to the more literate of his audiences. It is noted that never before had a playwright enjoyed sufficient acclaim to see his works published and sold as popular literature in the midst of his career. While Shakespeare could not be accounted wealthy by London standards, his success allowed him to retire in comfort to Stratford in 1611.

William Shakespeare wrote his will in 1611, bequeathing his properties to his daughter Susanna (married in 1607 to Dr. John Hall). To his other daughter, Judith, he left £300; and to his wife, "my second best bed." William Shakespeare allegedly died on his birthday, April 23, in 1616. This may be a romantic myth, but Shakespeare was interred at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25. In 1623, two working companions of Shakespeare from the Lord Chamberlain's Men, John Heminges and Henry Condell, printed the First Folio edition of the Collected Works, of which half the plays contained therein were previously unpublished. The First Folio also contained Shakespeare's sonnets. William Shakespeare's legacy is a body of work that will never again be equaled in Western civilization. His words have endured for four hundred years, and still reach across the centuries as powerfully as ever. Even in death, he leaves a final piece of verse as his epitaph:

*Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones.*



The Works of William Shakespeare

THE HISTORY PLAYS

Henry VI Part I, II & III
Richard III
King John
Edward III
Richard II
Henry IV Part I & II
Henry V
Henry VIII

THE ROMANCES

Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter's Tale
The Tempest
The Two Noble Kinsmen

THE COMEDIES

The Comedy of Errors
The Taming of the Shrew
The Two Gentlemen of Verona
Love's Labour's Lost
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Merchant of Venice
The Merry Wives of Windsor
Much Ado About Nothing
As You Like It
Twelfth Night
Troilus and Cressida
All's Well That Ends Well
Measure for Measure

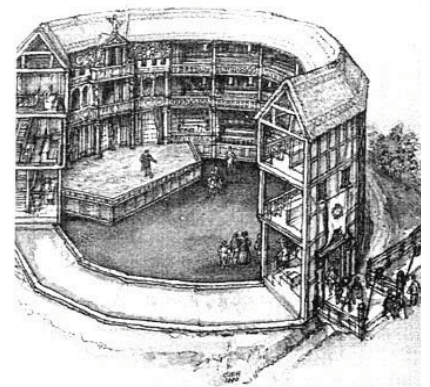
THE TRAGEDIES

Titus Andronicus
Romeo and Juliet
Julius Caesar
Hamlet
Othello
King Lear
Macbeth
Antony and Cleopatra
Coriolanus
Timon of Athens

The Globe Theatre

Most of Shakespeare's plays were originally performed in The Globe. James Burbage (the father of Shakespeare's star actor, Richard – who originated the roles of Hamlet, King Lear, Othello among others) owned a theatre called simply The Theatre. When the owner of the land refused to renew his lease, James and his son, along with about a dozen actors and thugs, dismantled the entire building one winter's night in 1599 and used the wood to build the Globe in a different location in South London (the rough side of town).

The Globe was a polygonal, roofless building that provided balcony seats (known as the gallery) for the wealthy and standing-room only space on the dirt floor for the common people ('the groundlings'). During a production of *Henry VIII* on June 29, 1613, fireworks which were used to announce the entrance of the king ignited the thatch on the roof of the gallery and burned The Globe to the ground. Even after being rebuilt, the Globe never retained its previous glory.



Forms and Conventions

CONVENTIONS OF SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

In its broadest definition, a comedy is a play with a happy ending. The form originated in ancient Greece in association with fertility rituals, so it is no accident that most of Shakespeare's comedies end with a marriage and sometimes a sly reference to the "happy event" that is expected in nine months' time.

One critic describes Shakespeare's comedies as "whimsical love-tales acted out in improbable places by charming aristocrats." Almost all of the comedies are romantic stories in which the lovers must overcome a series of obstacles in order to be united. These obstacles are sometimes external, but more often than not are the result of the lovers' own foolishness, pride, or wilful blindness. Events usually reach a high point of ridiculousness before order is restored.

Elements found in many of the comedies include:

- A pastoral setting, sometimes imbued with magical elements (e.g., the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)
- Disguise (sometimes across gender) and mistaken identity leading to great complication
- Parallel plots involving high (aristocratic) and low (servant) characters, or an inversion of the usual power dynamic between classes
- The eventual reunion of long-separated family members
- A conclusion involving at least one pledge of marriage

IMPROVISATIONAL THEATRE

Although *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* follows a script, it owes much of its comedy to the traditions of improvisational theatre. In an improvised play, actors are working without a script, using a variety of techniques and games to create the piece right before the audience's eyes. An improvised play is always a one-of-a-kind event.

One of the pioneers of improvisational theatre is Keith Johnstone, an Englishman who worked at the Royal Court Theatre in London for 10 years, then moved to Calgary, where he founded Loose Moose Theatre Company and developed the techniques used by TheatreSports companies across the world. In Johnstone's experience, most people have been taught to stifle their creativity, and he sought ways of helping them release their imaginations. His mission was to bring spontaneity back to the theatre by encouraging the performers to take risks and embrace failure. He also sought ways of making the audience more active participants.

A typical improv show features a number of sketches in which the actors use audience suggestions to create a story from a very loose template. The actors must be willing to play along with each other's ideas and able to adapt quickly to the play's ever-changing shape. At its best, improvisational theatre is exhilarating to watch—like star athletes, gifted improvisers provide a vicarious thrill when they are "in the zone."

Interesting Reading

THE REDUCED SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Creators of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, the Reduced Shakespeare Company (RSC) has its origins as a pass-the-hat act at Californian “renaissance fairies.” Since 1981, they have created five world-renowned stage shows, four TV programmes, and numerous radio pieces. The company’s many international performances include stops at the White House, Kennedy Centre, Lincoln Centre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Montreal’s “Just For Laughs Festival,” the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Israel Theatre Festival, extensive overseas tours to Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan, Israel, Singapore, Bermuda, and Great Britain, and countless civic and university venues from Alaska to Florida and Hawaii to Maine.

The company’s first two shows, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* and *The Complete History of America (Abridged)* are officially London’s longest-running comedies, having played in repertory at the Criterion Theatre in the West End since 1996. In 2003, *The Bible: The Complete Word of God (Abridged)* joined the London rotation, giving the RSC more shows in the West End than Andrew Lloyd Webber.

The company also applied its fast, funny, and physical approach to World History in *Western Civilization: The Complete Musical (Abridged)*—originally titled *The Complete Millennium Musical (Abridged)*—which premiered in 1998 and toured the US, the UK, and Australia with three different casts throughout 1999 and 2000. And in *All the Great Books (Abridged)*, the “other RSC” returns to its literary roots with a comically condensed compendium of the “World’s Greatest Literature.”

For television, the RSC filmed Reduced Shakespeare, a live performance of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* for PBS. They also wrote and starred in *The Ring Reduced*, a half-hour version of Wagner’s epic Ring Cycle, for Channel 4, as well as reducing the Edinburgh Festival for the BBC and the soap opera *Glenroe* for RTE Ireland. The guys are currently developing several TV projects, and have appeared on CBS Sunday Morning, NBC’s Today Show, Entertainment Tonight, CNN’s Showbiz This Week, and New Zealand’s Celebrity Wheel of Fortune (they lost). They also provided voices for Steven Spielberg’s animated film *Balto*.

The RSC’s six-part radio series *The Reduced Shakespeare Radio Show* aired in 1994 on the BBC World Service. They also wrote *Gone with the Wind II: Scarlet Fever* for the BBC. In America, the RSC are frequent contributors to National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*, and their holiday special *The Reduced Shakespeare Company Christmas* is broadcast annually on Public Radio International.

Set Design

AILSAPATERSON

Design



Ailsa completed the International Baccalaureate in Adelaide and went on to gain a Bachelor of Dramatic Art in Design (NIDA), graduating in 2003. Design credits for theatre include *IN THE NEXT ROOM or the vibrator play*, *War Mother*, *The Ham Funeral*, *Three Sisters* (Costume Design), *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, *The Price* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (State Theatre Company), *Skylight* (Ensemble), *Shining City* (Griffin Theatre Company), *Hansel and Gretel* and *La Sonnambula* (Pacific Opera), *Faustus* and *Madame Melville* (BSharp), *Vampirella*, *The Internationalist* and *Bone* (Darlinghurst Theatre), *A Couple of Blaguards* (Seymour Centre/Comedy Theatre), *Shifted* (Sydney Dance Company), *Debris* (Old Fitzroy Theatre/Melbourne Fringe) and *Twelfth Night* (ATYP).

Ailsa has worked in costume on *The Straits* (ABC), *Laid* (ABC), *Underbelly – A Tale of Two Cities*, *Underbelly – The Golden Mile*, *Blue Water High*, *The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce*, *Ten Empty*, *The Boy from Oz Arena Spectacular*, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert The Musical*, *High School Musical*, *The Asian Games* and styled the Eskimo Joe film clip *Life is Better with You*.

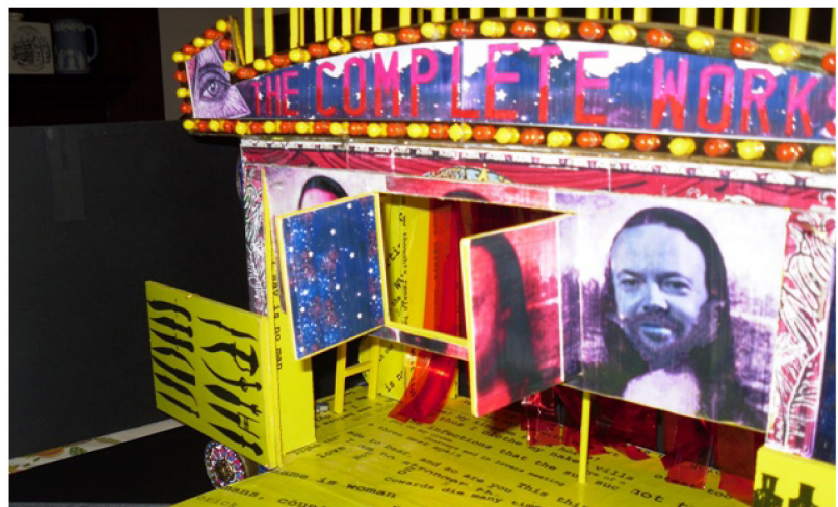
Ailsa has been awarded the 2011 Mike Walsh Fellowship for overseas professional development in 2012.

1. *What was your starting point for developing the design concept for ‘The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)’?*

When Adam Cook and I originally discussed the design, we decided immediately to dispense with the scripted design idea of a 2D representation of the Globe theatre and very amateur-looking painted flats. We wanted to create a unique and vibrant environment to house all of the plays, while still allowing for plenty of ideas to be generated in the rehearsal room by the actors themselves. I began to think about the requirements for our show in terms of the regional tour, and that is when the idea for a travelling theatre wagon emerged. The idea is that these three actors perform their show all over Australia, travelling in their wagon and unfolding its surprises in each new location. Everything they require to perform the show is housed in their crazy theatre wagon of amazement. It was important for us to be able to keep revealing new surprises in the set, while also providing various height levels for acting upon and internal lighting elements. The scale of the wagon also helps to make the space in the Dunstan Playhouse much more intimate. We also examined the typical elements of a stage show – a red curtain, a proscenium and a sign, and interpreted them in a modern, camped-up, Australian way. Thus, the red curtain is strips of welding plastic, the proscenium is gold corrugated iron and the sign is a cabaret-style light bulb sign.

2. *What were your influences and what inspired you whilst designing this piece?*

Once the idea of the wagon had come to light, we started to look at a wide range of influences, including medieval pageant wagons, circus wagons, travelling salesmen wagons, men's tool sheds and even the Adelaide pie cart. Certain visual elements from Shakespeare's Globe Theatre have been incorporated into the set, including the starscape on the canopy and wagon sides. The colours of the Shakespeare official crest (yellow and black) have been inspiration for the interior of the wagon, and the panel of Shakespeare portraits is suggestive of pop art prints by Andy Warhol. We have also been inspired by some of the mystique about Shakespeare himself, in terms of whether he did write all of his plays, his involvement in freemasonry, and his interest in the esoteric. Some of the symbols on the wagon reflect these notions.



3. *What were the challenges in designing this piece?*

The challenges in designing this piece were mainly related to the parameters for a touring set, as well as creating an environment suitable for a large number of different Shakespeare plays. When the show tours regional South Australia, it often bumps into the theatre in a couple of hours, and has to fit in a very small touring truck. This means that it has to come apart into units that fit in the truck, and be able to be reconstructed quickly and with a limited crew. We did consider getting the wagon itself registered and towing it around the state, but we ended up creating a design that was able to break down into small parts and slot into the wagon. This required very careful attention to scale and dimension. The other challenge was providing an environment that was generalized enough to be suitable for every Shakespeare play. The notion of the wagon itself being a stage on a stage, suits this requirement perfectly.

4. *With three actors playing multiple roles, how did you approach costume design?*

The costume design required each actor to have an initial contemporary look, followed by a transformation into an Elizabethan costume. We made the decision early on to represent all of the additional costume changes with single items, for example a wig, a hat or a skirt. The show becomes increasingly hectic, with lots of fast changes and running about, so this has made the process much simpler. Each of these items is stylized to fit into the general costume look. I wanted to create a unique identity for each of the actors, and there is a hint of their Elizabethan theme in their initial casual looks. The fabric choices are very bold, colourful and stagey, because the piece is extremely theatrical and unashamedly camp. We also wanted a surprise element to each costume, so the light-up cod pieces were introduced. Nathan portrays the majority of female characters, so his costume is themed in pink with heart motifs and his cod piece is a rose. Mark performs the more serious roles, including Hamlet, so his costume morphs into an all-black version for the second act, and his cod-piece is a skull. Damian is the most self-assured, and there is discussion at one point of various theatrical superstitions, so we looked at the idea of a peacock for the colour inspiration for his costume.

5. *Is the play set in any particular era?*

The play is set today, and all representations of Elizabethan times in the design are deliberately 'stagey.' The actors are in a show within a show, so they are continually blending contemporary props with the period-inspired elements.



Essay Questions

ENGLISH QUESTIONS

1. Would Shakespeare approve or disapprove of this play and what it has done to his material?
2. Does this play teach us about Shakespeare?
3. Which of Shakespeare's plays did you learn something new about? Were there some you hadn't heard of?
4. Were there any moments of Shakespeare's language that stood out to you?
5. In the notes to the play, the playwrights suggest that 'topical references' should be updated to 'keep the show fresh and timely. Discuss the choices made in this production. ? If you were to update the script what are some current topics you could use?
6. How is humour used in this play? Describe various moments and how the humour worked?
7. How would you "reduce" the body of work of another famous author? Think of famous novelists, poets, journalists, songwriters. Could you condense the work of your favourite poet or songwriter into a single poem or song? Could you abridge a prolific novelist's life work into a single short story?
8. Many of Shakespeare's plays have been adapted, forming the basis for other plays, films, novels, etc. Find a contemporary adaptation of a Shakespeare play (e.g., Baz Luhrmann's film *Romeo and Juliet*). What is successful about it? What has the adaptation retained or dropped from Shakespeare's original?
9. If Shakespeare were alive today, what art form would he be working in? Can you think of anyone in today's world who might be viewed centuries from now as the Shakespeare of the 21st century?
10. Choose a famous Shakespeare line, either in or out of the play, and rework it in at least three different ways. How much can you change it while still retaining the same basic meaning? Try including popular slang.
11. Identify and discuss a few of the comedic devices (cross-dressing, word play, popular references) that exist in both the play and in Shakespeare's work. Think of other popular forms of comedy (a specific comedian or sitcom) and evaluate the similarities and differences in their work.
12. What moments did you enjoy in the play?
13. Who was your favourite character and why?

Essay Questions

DRAMA QUESTIONS

1. Lighting plays an important role in any production. Explain the various uses of lighting and the overall effect that each one achieved.
2. Read the section on set design and discuss the choices that were made. What did and didn't work and what would you have done differently?
3. Explain the relevance of the wagon in this production and how it was used throughout the show.
4. What are the different ways that music and sound is used in the play? What effect did this create?
5. Explain how audience participation was used in the play. How does this contribute to the overall experience for an audience? Did this participation help to increase or decrease audience's enjoyment of the performance?
6. Compare and contrast the three characters in the play and their different functions as storytellers.
7. This play was originally developed through improvisation. Discuss how this approach has affected the style and content.
8. Why do you think the playwrights specify in the notes to the play that actors performing the three roles should substitute the names depicted in the text for their own names?
9. Try to pick out the real plot twists and conventions of Shakespearean comedy from the "reduced" version. Identify which play is being spoofed in which lines of the "generic" comedy presented during the play.

DESIGN

The design for *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* utilises a wagon which houses all the props and costumes for the show and provides a performance space within the main stage space. Redesign the set and demonstrate how you would incorporate the vast array of props and costume required in the show whilst creating a multifaceted performance space.

PERFORMANCE

In small groups choose a scene from one of Shakespeare's plays and using improvisation, create a contemporary version of the scene condensed into 60 seconds!

Immediate Reactions

After viewing the play set aside time for class discussion. Consider the following aspects of the play, and record them into your journal.

	PRODUCTION ELEMENTS	PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS
Strengths		
Impact on Audience		
Weakness		
Impact on Audience		

Design Roles

For each of the following design roles, explain using three specific examples, how each role added meaning to the action or your understanding of context, theme or other aesthetic understandings of the drama event.

DESIGN ROLE	TECHNIQUE	WHAT DID THIS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PERFORMANCE
Lighting	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Set Design	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

Further Resources

SHAKESPEARE STUDY

- Bate, Jonathan and Russell Jackson. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Shakespeare on Stage*.

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- Boose, Lynda E. and Richard Burt. *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV and Video*. Routledge, 1997.
- Orgel, Stephen. *Imagining Shakespeare*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
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- Johnstone, Keith. *Improv!* Routledge, 1981.
- Nevraumont, Edward J. et al. *The Ultimate Improv Book: A Complete Guide to Comedy Improvisation*. Meriwether Publishing, 2002.

WEB LINKS*

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- <http://shakespeare.nowheres.com/>
- <http://www.shakespeare.com/>
- <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/homepage>
- <http://www.bardweb.net/>
- <http://www.online-literature.com/shakespeare>
- <http://www.reducedshakespeare.com/>
- <http://www.keithjohnstone.com>
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- <http://www.absoluteshakespeare.com>
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- <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk>
- <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org>
- <http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com>
- <http://www.shakespeare.mit.edu/>
- <http://www.shakespeare.clusty.com>
- http://www.folger.edu/education/sfk_kids/
- <http://laits.utexas.edu/shakespearekids/winedale>

*Web links were active when preparing this guide

REFERENCES

- INSIGHTS – A study guide to the Utah Shakespearean Festival
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**STATESA
THEATRE
COMPANY**