

The Book of Will

By Lauren Gunderson



Washburn Rural High School

January 7, 2022

Kansas State Thespian Festival

Director's Note

When I first read this play last year, I knew immediately this was what we needed, not only as a theatre department at WRHS, but as a community in the midst of incredibly strenuous times. I had lost my father only months earlier, and I knew many of our students had experienced their own difficulties, like so many of you, I'm sure. We would like to dedicate this play to everyone who has experienced loss or grief this last year, and hope that you'll be uplifted and comforted as we have been while creating this production together.

As Shakespeare's friends, Henry and John, wrote in their preface to the First Folio, "If then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him." (You can read their full dedication at the end of this program.) I hope after watching our production, you'll be drawn to finding some source, any source, of Shakespeare performance that you can understand and connect with yourself, and appreciate his heart and his brilliance. As Lauren Gunderson says, "Shakespeare is for everyone."

I've been deeply blessed to work with 3 former students on this production, which has meant the world to me as an educator. It's been pure joy to work with Nick Beasley on his first production as a lead designer and technical director, and I'm looking forward to launching many more shows with him. Hunter Nelson lent his brilliant skills as a professional dramaturg to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the play. Giselle (Hoyos) Gremmert provided insight on our early designs as the lead designer of her own theatre program. I am deeply grateful to wake up each day, knowing I get to make theatre in a community and state that enthusiastically support arts education, our program, and the futures of our students.

Maeghan Bishop, Director

"I can no other answer make, but thanks, and thanks."

Connie McGinnis

Doug Goheen

Families of our cast and crew

Topeka Civic Theatre

Sterling College Theatre, BoW Cast and Crew

Washburn University Theatre

USD437 Administration and Staff

KS Thespians Board & Festival Volunteers

The Play

London, England 1619-1623

The Globe Taphouse
St. Leonard's Church in Shoreditch, London
The Globe Theatre
W. Jaggard's Print Shop
Various streets and residences in London
Stratford-Upon-Avon

The Players

Henry Condell.....	Aidan Kent
John Heminges.....	Casey Schenk
Richard Burbage.....	Jaq Donaldson
Alice Heminges.....	Taylor Moore
Young Hamlet.....	Noah Hart
Elizabeth Condell.....	Kate Taddiken
Rebecca Heminges.....	Raegan Jacobs
Ed Knight.....	Dayton Hill
Ralph Crane.....	Griffin Reiff
Ben Jonson.....	Christian Ryan
William Jaggard.....	Teddy Decker
Isaac Jaggard.....	Cade Nelson
Marcus.....	Calvin Schenk
Emilia Bassano Lanier.....	MaryGrace Liew-Nguye
Anne Hathaway Shakespeare.....	Madison Torrez
Susannah Shakespeare.....	Lily Czechanski
Crier/Sir Dering.....	Jon Schocket
Compositor.....	Isaac Langley

The People of the Play

Shakespeare bequeathed money to Burbage, Condell, and Heminges to purchase mourning rings when he died, as a sign of friendship. By that time, these men had been performing together for over two decades.

Richard Burbage was born into a theatre family, and became a famous and successful actor before the age of 20. He is known for having originated many of the major leading characters in Shakespeare's plays, including Hamlet, Lear, Othello, Macbeth, Henry V, Romeo, and Richard III.

Henry Condell was age 43 at the time the play opens. His wife, **Elizabeth**, was the only child of a wealthy man. The couple had 9 children, only 3 of whom survived infancy. Henry died 4 years after the First Folio was published, and Elizabeth lived another 8 years after that.

John Heminges was age 53 at the start of our play. He was a grocer by trade, and at 22, he married **Rebecca**, the 17-year-old widow of a fellow actor. It is estimated they had 14 children, only half of whom survived to adulthood. John managed the business side of the King's Men more than he performed, and in later years was co-owner of a taphouse. The Heminges family also continued to work in the grocery business for additional income. John outlived Henry by 3 years.

Alice Heminges is a character largely created from the playwright's imagination, as there is little historical information available about John's individual children. But, it is true that many women at the time worked as "alewives" and brewed beer to sell in local establishments.

Ben Jonson was an educated man who wrote several plays, some of which even featured Shakespeare, Condell, and Heminges as actors. Jonson killed a man in a duel and was tried for murder, but was acquitted by lenient judges. He is often identified as England's first Poet Laureate, and within his own lifetime and the century after, Jonson was more popular than Shakespeare.

Emilia Bassano Lanier was the daughter of a Venetian musician who served Queen Elizabeth. Lanier published her first volume of poems, considered the first major collection of poems in English by a female writer, and feminist in nature. Some scholars believe she might be the “Dark Lady” mentioned by Shakespeare in his sonnets.

Ed Knight was the prompter or bookkeeper of the King’s Men. He dealt with censorship matters and prepared the company’s play texts for production, adding necessary information to turn an author’s manuscript into a promptbook.

Ralph Crane began his career as a law clerk and then became a professional scribe working for attorneys. By 1618 he was working for the King’s Men, producing multiple transcripts for their plays. He published a collection of his own poems in 1621.

William Jaggard developed one of the largest print shops of his generation. A later critic described Jaggard as an ‘infamous pirate, liar, and thief,’ yet he held a lot of power. In 1613 he began to go blind, likely a symptom of syphilis or mercury poisoning.

Isaac Jaggard likely supervised work on the First Folio when it began in his father’s shop in 1622, but got interrupted several times to continue efforts on other large book orders. Isaac was appointed Printer to the city of London after his father’s death, then died four years later in 1627.

Anne Hathaway Shakespeare was 26 when she married Will, who was 18. They had three children: Susanna, and the twins Hamnet and Judith. While Shakespeare was off establishing his theatre career in London, Anne and her children remained miles away in Stratford. She passed away months after the Folio was published in 1623.

Susanna Shakespeare Hall was Shakespeare’s oldest child. Her brother Hamnet died young, and their sister Judith was disinherited, and had no surviving children when she died. Thus, Susannah became the main inheritor of her father’s estate. She gave birth to one daughter, Elizabeth, who died childless in 1669, the last descendant of William Shakespeare, leaving no heirs.

Production Team

Director: Maeghan Bishop

Design/Technical Direction: Nick Beasley

Stage Manager/Props: Camryn Clark

Asst. Stage Manager: Bry McDaniel

Lighting Design/Operation: Brett Broadbent, Evan Davidson

Sound: Taylor Elliott

Projections: Canton Schenk

Shift/Props: Cameron Hightower, Aiden Garcia, Kaleb Glendinning

Costume Supervisor: Linnea Hoyos

Costume Design/Crew Lead: Mackenzie Smith

Hair/Makeup: Jaidyn Alcantar, Analese Estudillo, Addison Resch

WARBU
THEATRE

The Book of Will is Produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service Inc., New York

Originally commissioned and produced at the Denver Center Theatre Company

A division of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts (Kent Thompson, Artistic Director)

Subsequent Rolling World Premiere produced by Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Garrison, New York

(Davis McCallum, Artistic Director; Kate Liberman, Managing Director)

Preface to the First Folio, 1623

To the great Variety of Readers.

From the most able, to him that can but spell: there you are numbered. We had rather you were weighed; especially, when the fate of all books depends upon your capacities and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now public, & you will stand for your privileges we know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a book, the Stationer says...

It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth, and overseen his own writings; but since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his Friends the office of their care, and pain, to have collected & published them; and so to have published them, as where (before) you were abused with diverse stolen, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors, that exposed them: even those, are now offered to your view cured, and perfect of their limbs; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers as he conceived them.

Who, as he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who only gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that read him. And there we hope, to your diverse capacities, you will find enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hidden, than it could be lost. Read him, therefore; and again, and again. And if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can be your guides: if you need them not, you can lead yourselves, and others, and such readers we wish him.

John Heminges

Henry Condell