

What You Will

An Introduction to Shakespeare



This production starts off with a shipwreck, the one that opens **The Tempest**. We find ourselves cast ashore in the strange land of the Elizabethan Theatre. And we encounter some of the characters that populate this world.



Back in **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Titania, Queen of the Fairies, after a quarrel with her husband, Oberon, resulting in him putting magic love-juice on her eyes, falls in love with Bottom in his donkey form. But eventually the magic is broken, Bottom is able to return to perform their play - Pyramus and Thisbe.

In an enchanted wood Nick Bottom and his friends rehearse their play in **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, before Puck turns up and gives Bottom an unwanted head transplant.

In **Henry IV Part One** we meet the wayward Prince Hal and the drunken, cowardly knight Sir John Falstaff - one of the great comic characters. At the end of **Henry IV Part Two**, Hal, now King Henry V, publicly rejects Falstaff, whose death at the beginning of the next play, **Henry V** is described by the Hostess of the inn. Then in **Henry VI** Shakespeare makes fun of rabble-rousing politicians with Jack Cade's rebellion.



Our second shipwreck, this time in **Twelfth Night**, washes Viola up on the coast of Ilyria, where she meets Olivia who falls in love with her, fooled into thinking Viola is a boy, much to Viola's surprise.

Scotland is thrown into turmoil as **Macbeth** murders King Duncan, and seizes the throne.



In the famous balcony scene **Romeo and Juliet** swear their love for each other, despite their families long standing feud.

In 1613, during a performance of Henry VIII or All Is True, disaster struck the Globe. As the actors and the audience watched the playhouse burn to the ground, they might have recalled Prospero's words in The Tempest: "The great Globe itself...shall dissolve...We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life/ Is rounded in a sleep." Shakespeare died three years later in 1616 at the age of 52.

To end our production we return to A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Puck makes a request of the audience. He says the actors were merely shadows, and if the audience haven't liked the play, they should think of it as having been nothing but... a dream.