

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 Illyria, 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.