

BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT

presents



The First Annual

Bucks County Student Shakespeare Festival

For High Schools in Bucks County

May 30, 2017

To be held at William Tennent High School



The Play's the Thing



The Bucks County Student Shakespeare Festival

The study of Shakespeare can often be an onerous task—for student and teacher. Students sit at desks, reading aloud in a monotone, and the teacher tries to explain, encourage, and excite.

The Royal Shakespeare Company and the Folger Shakespeare Library have led the way in challenging and changing the traditional teaching of Shakespeare in classrooms. As the RSC says, “We believe that young people get the most out of Shakespeare's plays when they work on them actively, speaking the text aloud.” Their research supports that a performance-based study of Shakespeare increases student understanding, appreciation, and creativity. In addition to the academic gains, students also develop key traits such as confidence, leadership, resilience, and empathy for diverse people and approaches. The Folger Shakespeare Library promotes a philosophy of teaching that encourages teachers to get students on their feet, emphasizing that students need to connect to the language directly and kinesthetically.

The Folger holds a Student Shakespeare Festival each year during which thousands of Washington, D. C. area kids perform scenes from Shakespeare’s plays. The productions are simple, with primary focus on the language. Sets, costumes, and props are minimal and suggestive of time, place, and symbol. The students perform for each other, with the audience enjoined to be supportive. It is a celebration not a contest.



In collaboration with the Bucks County Intermediate Unit and the teachers of the Reading and Language Arts Advisory Council, we propose a student performance festival open to high school students across Bucks County. Troupes from schools will participate in inter-school workshops which will be facilitated by local theater professionals and teachers. Students will interpret, memorize, design, create, and perform Shakespeare’s original text.

Be not afraid of greatness. . .

Performing Shakespeare’s works allows students to analyze, interpret, collaborate, create, and publicly present results in a real-world atmosphere.

Guidelines for Participating Schools

COMPANIES

For our inaugural year, we are going to limit schools to one Company per school so we can confine the Festival to a single day. If we have greater demand, we will work to expand the Festival.

How your school chooses its Company is entirely up to you. You may hold open whole-school auditions; you may make the Festival a post-AP Exam project; you may have a Battle of the Bard to determine which Company in your school gets to come to the Festival; there may be one enthusiastic teacher who wants to involve his/her students.

Give your company a clever name if you like (there might be an award).

How you choose to rehearse is entirely up to you as well.

We strongly encourage making this event as **inclusive** as possible. Shakespeare would want it that way, don't you think?

TEXT

Each Company will perform one or more scenes from any of Shakespeare's works, lasting no more than **15 minutes total**. Companies may also perform Shakespeare sonnets, songs, or poems.

Cuts are permitted; modern language adaptations are **not**. Short (no more than a line or two) modern English "bridges" are permitted between scenes or as introductions, but **90 percent of your presentation must consist of Shakespeare's language**.

PEOPLE

All Festival participants—*including teachers and adult chaperones*—are expected to stay the entire day and to be a spirited audience for all performances. The Festival day begins at about 8:00 a.m. and concludes by about 4:00 p.m. Please make arrangements for bus transportation with your district.

This event lasts **all day**. We expect that for this one day, students will make other arrangements concerning jobs, rehearsals, sports practices, etc., in order to remain for the entire Festival.

Each company should appoint two **Leading Players**, to serve as "team captains" to manage the company (keep them focused, encourage participation, ensure clean-up, etc.).

Cast and crew combined cannot exceed 30 students—each of these students must have some kind of role or job in the production. Each student group must be accompanied by **at least one adult for every 10 students**. Adults will be seated with their students and are expected to monitor their own students' behavior at all times.

Can we bring students just as audience members?

No. Every student who comes with you should be invested in the event.

Students and adults should turn off their cell phones during the Festival and put them in a safe place. Attendees will be able to check their phones during the lunch break.

Being a good audience member is a very important part of the Festival. Please make sure students know the expectation to extend to other performers the same courtesies and attention that they appreciate while they're on stage. This requirement includes being in the theater for all performances, and being a quiet, attentive audience for other students onstage. Everyone should be in their seats during performances. Please do not bring students who are not capable of meeting expectations.

During the intervals between performances we will have activities to entertain and energize the audience. This is also the opportunity for them to use the restroom.

Dress comfortably—be ready & able to move for workshops and activities. Bring a sweatshirt in case the auditorium is chilly. You may want your Company to wear a “uniform” or color scheme that distinguishes them from the rest of the groundlings so you can keep track of your students. Show your school and Shakespeare spirit!

There will be special Festival t-shirts available for purchase. Remind students to bring \$10 if they want one. If you have students for whom purchasing a t-shirt will be a financial hardship, please let us know ahead of time.

FOOD

Lunch will be available for purchase from the WTHS cafeteria or attendees may bring bagged lunches.

Attendees are not permitted to eat or drink in the auditorium, except for water.

There will be no refrigerator or microwave available.

Students with medical requirements should communicate with their chaperones. Make sure you have whatever emergency contacts your district requires for field trips.

PERFORMANCE

Performance length is **limited to 15 minutes**. Set up time is limited to **10 minutes**. You will strike your equipment as the next group sets up. We suggest you rehearse your set-up and strike plans as well as your performance.

Going over your time pushes the whole day back. We will hold you to your time limits.

You are strongly encouraged to let students lead all aspects of the production: edit their own selections for performance, direct their peers, gather costumes and props, and take on other responsibilities. You know your students best; work in the way that suits your Company.

Recorded music or sound effects should be played on a portable player (i.e. boombox) brought by your Company for this purpose. Any live music must be performed by student cast members.

The curtain will open to signal the start of each performance.

Each performance should end with a curtain call.

LIGHTING, SOUND, AND SPECIAL EFFECTS

Basic stage lighting will be the same for all performances. No blackouts.

The performers will **not** have microphones. You may not bring your own amplification system. Performers must project in a 1700-seat auditorium. We will do our best to have general stage microphones but performers must be ready to be loud.

Any special effects (thunder, fanfares, etc.) will have to be performed live or on recordings operated by your students.

PROPS AND SET

We will provide basic furniture—a table, chairs, benches. Do not bring furniture. You may use fabric to cover our furniture—to turn an ordinary chair into a throne, for example.

Each group may bring props in a box labeled with your school's name. The box should be a standard 25-gallon plastic tote measuring 20 x 29 x 17 inches (or the equivalent size cardboard box). Each company is **limited to TWO boxes**. Anything that does not fit may be subject to removal.

Please do not bring valuables, either for stage or personal use.

Please do not bring props that can be dangerous or messy; these include liquid, glass or other breakables, food (even if not consumed), fire, stage blood, non-stage weapons, guns of any kind, dry ice, fog machines, confetti, glitter, or anything that is irreplaceable if lost or broken.

COSTUMES

Please keep costumes and make-up simple. No one will have the chance to fully change clothing during the Festival day. Students should have costume pieces that can go over their regular clothing.

Use your imagination to create costumes, props, and set decoration that are *suggestive* of time & place. See the resources posted on the Festival web page for inspiration.

BROADSIDE & BANNER

Each Company should have a banner to display in your seating area and onstage when your students perform. Information about banners will be forthcoming.

A broadside is a single page with all pertinent group information, i.e. Company name, school name, production title, a list of players & crew, and a short synopsis. You will be asked to submit this information to the Festival two weeks before the date.

We will publish a printed program, show a slide with the information, and/or have our host read the information—as time and resources allow.

We encourage student involvement in the creation of your broadside and banner.

It doesn't have to be fancy.

CAMARADERIE, COLLABORATION, AND CLASS

The Festival is not a competition. There may be some silly awards given but there is no “best” other than *everyone’s best*.

We are each other’s fans, not rivals.

To do Shakespeare well requires discipline, teamwork, concentration, and hours of study. It requires courage because stepping onto that stage is daunting. Entreat your students to be generous, listen carefully, and show understanding and empathy for each other.

REGISTRATION FEE

Each participating school is required to pay a registration fee of \$ 35. More information forthcoming.

GENERAL ADVICE TO TEACHERS

- Let students take charge but be in charge of your students.
- Guide them to make smart choices that are appropriate to a school setting.
- It’s okay if they are not Dench, McKellan, Branagh, or Mirren.
- Involve all kinds of kids.
- Don’t spend a lot of money; be creative & resourceful.
- There is no such thing as too much preparation.
- Try not to get competitive; leave off school rivalry.
- Make this fun for them...and yourself!

RESOURCES TO GET STARTED & INSPIRED

Folger Shakespeare Library <http://www.folger.edu/>

Royal Shakespeare Company <https://www.rsc.org.uk/>

Shakespeare and Common Core <http://www.folger.edu/sites/default/files/CCSS1.28.15.pdf>

Studying Shakespeare Makes You Smarter [Chicago Youth Shakespeare](#)

Shakespeare Set Free series

Folger Shakespeare Library

How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare

Ken Ludwig

A Practical Guide to Shakespeare for the Primary School: 50 Lesson Plans using Drama John Doona

Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company Joe Winston

Creative Shakespeare: The Globe Education Guide to Practical Shakespeare Globe Theatre Fiona Banks

Teaching Shakespeare: A Handbook for Teachers (Cambridge School Shakespeare) Rex Gibson

VIDEOS all collected on the [WTHS Library Channel](#) on YouTube

[Denver Public Schools](#) over 5,000 students participate!

[Henry V](#) Hillcrest High School Utah Shakespeare Festival (overall video about production)

[Othello](#) Thomas Jefferson High School Folger Student Festival

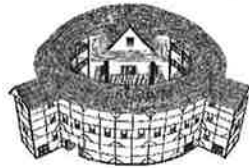
[Richard II](#) Hillcrest High School Utah Shakespeare Festival

[Macbeth](#) Bedford School Contact Theater Manchester England (all girls)

[Richard III](#) Unionville High School Stratford Festival, Ontario

[Twelfth Night](#) (Abridged!) Carlsbad High School San Diego Shakespeare Festival

[A Midsummer Night's Dream](#) Denver Public Schools Shakespeare Festival (middle school)



All the world's a stage...

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