

Shakespeare

The Musical

A lively musical about the life, times and work of William Shakespeare

Includes excerpts from Shakespeare's plays & poetry

Original words and music by Cenarth Fox

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Shakespeare the Musical

Words and music by Cenarth Fox

Published by FOX PLAYS

Reviews of this popular musical staged by adults and teenagers

A fantastic, lively, jam-packed musical. An historically accurate musical about Shakespeare's life and times presented in a lively, fun way. For all ages. A great introduction to Shakespeare.

Gemco Players

"A play about the Bard with excerpts from his plays and poems, with words and music by Cenarth Fox, proved to be a memorable spectacle. Over 100 fourth form students gave an excellent performance of music, dance, song and drama. It was a joy to watch these beaming teenage girls on stage as they were obviously enjoying themselves. Maybe it was the subject matter, very dear to my own sensibility, but surely the verve and confidence which all and sundry showed on stage, that made me wish the spectacle would never come to a close." **The Times of Malta**

Shakespeare the Musical was excellent and both students and staff enjoyed producing and performing this musical. It was brilliant. We were absolutely thrilled. The show had history, entertainment and toe-tapping tunes.

Goulburn Valley Grammar School

Your play *Shakespeare the Musical* is lively and entertaining

John Bell **The Bell Shakespeare Company**

Shakespeare the Musical went exceedingly well and was greatly enjoyed and appreciated. I cannot but thank and congratulate you once again as you were 'the talk of the town' last Friday. All had words of praise for the great script and the fabulous music. I will be send some digital pictures of the show - the witches in particular carried it through like nothing before and it was so evident that they were loving it! I will definitely be contacting you later on in the year for another of your great scripts.

St Joseph's School Malta

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Synopsis

William Shakespeare is the world greatest playwright. We know about his plays but what of the man himself? And what was life like in his day? Shakespeare's England had spies, persecution, murder, barbaric public entertainment, plagues, executions, love, romance, poverty, wealth and danger. His plays reflected the times.

Shakespeare – the Musical reveals the Stratford schoolboy, the teenage father and then the actor and playwright in licentious London.

His work is universally known and acclaimed being rich in language and in the study of "the human condition". His life was like his plays, full of adventure, grief, triumph, romance and danger. He wrote tragedies, comedies and histories and led a mysterious and fascinating life. Appreciate the plays. Appreciate the playwright.

Set Design

There were no sets in plays staged in Shakespeare's day. There were no intervals either. The plays would last for two or three hours [even longer] without a break. The actors would announce the new setting with a few words about a forest or ship or castle and/or by their clothes. A heavy cloak would signify outdoors.

Shakespeare – the Musical follows some of these Elizabethan traditions, in part at least. A few props are used and recycled during the play. The actors move what little scenery there is. An interval is provided simply because today's audiences are not free to purchase apples, nuts and beer where they watch the play and buckets or whatever are not nearby for various bodily functions! Thank goodness!

A bare stage/performing space is required. One or more boxes with steps or ramps will allow you to mount scenes on different levels. You could have an all-black backdrop or one with a scene of 16th century London - St. Paul's, the Thames, the Globe, etc. You can dress your bare set with a myriad of characters. If you have a proscenium arch, this could be decorated with an Elizabethan frieze or similar. The Globe theatre [both versions] had its audiences on three sides of the players.

Props should be easy to transport. Realistic-looking costumes are recommended and were considered essential in Shakespeare's plays. Room for speedy entrances and exits is required particularly if large numbers are used in chorus/crowd scenes.

One important ingredient of Shakespeare's plays was that the momentum was maintained throughout. There was no break between scenes. That situation is required with this script. Clever use of lighting will enable one scene to flow into another. A seamless connection. It is essential that the performing area and wing space allows the play to continue uninterrupted.

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Notes on the Script

* Contemporary language is used throughout but the Shakespearean excerpts are in what many consider to be their original form i.e. Elizabethan English. The contrast in vocabulary may/should highlight the excerpts.

* Each director will give their own interpretation. However, Elizabethan acting is thought to have been declamatory making use of gestures. Directors didn't exist in Shakespeare's day. Whilst performances in smaller indoor theatres e.g. Blackfriars, probably used a more intimate style of acting, the excerpts in this script are either staged at theatres like the Globe [an outdoors theatre] or at Court before Queen Elizabeth and King James. The script is obviously fiction. The personalities of the characters, dialogue and events are invented but based on fact. The following incidents are generally believed to be true.

The theatre called the Theatre was dismantled, re-built as the Globe, destroyed by fire and re-built again. And again.

Shakespeare married aged 18 and fathered three children before his 21st birthday.

The second Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, was a one-time favourite of Queen Elizabeth. He later led a revolt against her, was brought to trial and executed.

The third Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, supported Shakespeare and is said by some to be the man addressed in Shakespeare's sonnets. The Earl backed Essex in the uprising against the Queen. Southampton was sentenced to death but reprieved. He was later released by James 1. Henry took his cat to the Tower.

The theatre troupe to which Shakespeare belonged was known by different names. Its final title was *The King's Men*. The King being James 1. This acting troupe was very successful, very popular and made a great deal of money most of which went to its shareholders [sharers] of whom Shakespeare was one.

In Stratford, John Shakespeare was what we today call a mayor. He fell into debt and was listed as someone who failed to attend church. His will used words associated with the Catholic faith.

Richard Field was about two years older than William Shakespeare. They grew up in Stratford. Field moved to London where he became a successful printer.

There were many spies in Elizabethan England, for and against the government. Spies travelled abroad. Strict laws existed against hiding Catholic priests, against attending a Catholic Mass and against not attending Church of England services.

In 1973 Emilia Lanier was named by A.L.Rowse in his book *Shakespeare The Man* as the Dark Lady in Shakespeare's Sonnets. Her father was Italian, she had a son by Lord Hunsdon, married a court musician and wrote poetry.

There are thousands of books about William Shakespeare. Some writers believe the plays attributed to Shakespeare were written by someone else. Some claims were made even when Shakespeare was alive. The plays we read/watch today are based on the edition published seven years after Shakespeare died. No letters written by Shakespeare have been found. Surviving specimens of his signature create great interest. What is fact? What is fiction? You decide.

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Characters

Shakespeare – The Musical has about 30 roles and a busy chorus. You can stage the show with as few as 20 players. Much doubling/tripling can occur e.g. Teacher/Vicar, Official/Knight, Queens Elizabeth and Anna, etc. The company or chorus requires all types of characters who are often on stage. Many chorus members can play small roles e.g Vendor, Pimp, Spectator, Local Man. William Shakespeare appears from ages 12 to 52 played by two actors. Several of the characters age many years. Consider using the same actor with sensible make-up. In Shakespeare's day, all actors in public performances were male. Boys and young men took female roles. Cross-dressing was common. Of course you can use all female or all male casts or a mixture. Have fun.

WITCHES – three witches who act as narrators throughout the musical

[Shakespeare often called the narrator CHORUS but here they are called WITCH]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE [boy] - 12/13 year old schoolboy

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE [man] - 18 to 52 year old man

ANNE SHAKESPEARE - 26 - 56 year wife of Shakespeare

JOHN SHAKESPEARE - 40 - 60 year old father of Shakespeare

MARY SHAKESPEARE - 35 - 60 year old mother of Shakespeare

TEACHER - male, Stratford school teacher - middle aged, Oxford graduate

TRAVELLING ACTORS [4 or more] - visitors to Stratford - male players

VICAR - Vicar of Holy Trinity church, Stratford

RICHARD FIELD - 30 to 50 year old printer who moved from Stratford to London

RICHARD BURBAGE - 30 to 55 year actor, fellow actor with Shakespeare

JOHN HEMINGES - 30 to 55 year actor, fellow actor with Shakespeare

HENRY CONDELL - 30 to 55 year actor, fellow actor with Shakespeare

ROBERT GOUGH - 20 year old actor, playing female roles with Shakespeare

OFFICIAL - London public servant

KNIGHT - soldier loyal to the crown

QUEEN ELIZABETH 1- aged 40 to 60

SECRETARY CECIL FALSINGHAM [fictitious character] - oleaginous public servant

SOUTHAMPTON - Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton - ages from 18 to 48

EMILIA LANIER - Shakespeare's lover - ages 24 to 54

KING JAMES 1 - aged 38 to 48

QUEEN ANNA - wife of King James - aged 30 to 40

GUY FAWKES

Chorus members including townspeople, bear-baiters, booksellers, prostitutes, soldiers, actors [known as players], priests, prisoners, theatre-goers, children, members of the Royal Court [ladies in waiting, nobles, servants, etc], Gunpowder Plot conspirators

Characters in excerpts from plays by William Shakespeare

[The name in brackets is the actor from Burbage's/Shakespeare's troupe who may have played this role. You may use other actors even females if you have the numbers and inclination. But often the excerpt finishes and the actor in brackets appears soon after so please consider this]

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[The names in brackets – Condell, Burbage, Gough, Heminges, etc are suggestions only]

Titus Andronicus

TITUS [Condell]
TAMORA [Gough]

SATURINUS [Heminges]
LAVINIA

The Comedy of Errors

ANTIPHOLUS of EPHEUS [Condell]
DROMIO of EPHEUS
ADRIANA [Gough]

ANTIPHOLUS of SYRACUSE [Heminges]
DROMIO of SYRACUSE

Henry IV

FALSTAFF [Burbage]
PRINCE HARRY [Heminges]

HOSTESS [Gough]

The Merry Wives of Windsor

MRS FORD [Gough]
MRS PAGE

FALSTAFF/SIR JOHN [Burbage]
MR FORD [Shakespeare]

King Henry V

KING HARRY [Burbage]

Macbeth

WITCHES [Witches]

Richard II

DUKE OF YORK [Condell]
RICHARD [Burbage]
Attendant

NORTHUMBERLAND [Shakespeare]
BOLINGBROKE [Heminges]

Henry VIII

WOLSEY [Heminges]
HENRY [Burbage]
KATHERINE [Gough]

CAMPIEUS [Condell]
CRIER

Hamlet

POLONIUS [Shakespeare]

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[OVERTURE begins. Curtain rises on stage with minimum scenery but maximum cast. It is a frozen tableaux. Dress the stage with your cast. Drunks are sleeping/swigging. Ladies and gentlemen are out walking. Children are playing. Prostitutes are laughing with prospective customers. A man has a bear on a chain. A hawker has tray of goods for sale. Some strolling players [buskers] are dancing/entertaining onlookers. One or more enthusiastic ghouls have long spikes with a decapitated head thereon. A bookseller sells books. TIP. The fewer props the better. Mime where possible. Through the frozen tableaux, WITCHES appear from different directions, move downstage and address the audience. WITCHES indicate those mentioned in their speech]

Witch 1 *[Spoken over the music]* Welcome to Merrie England. Did I say merrie? Ah yes. A land of dreamy summer days, village greens and rosy-cheeked children. A place of languid beauty, hedgerows, hedgehogs and steadfast Christian love.

Witch 2 Sadly, this part of Merrie England is anything but merrie. This is London, 1593. Bubonic plague is rife. Open sewers invade the senses. St. Paul's is crowded with drunks, traders and prostitutes. Bishopsgate has a splendid row of decapitated heads and the Bear Pit allows dogs and bears to tear themselves apart for your entertainment.

Witch 3 Even our own Queen Elizabeth loves the Bear Pit. Let's face it. Who needs theatre? Who needs actors? It's here, right now, before our very eyes. *[Announces]* All the world's a stage!
[COMPANY comes alive in boisterous even threatening fashion. WITCHES either exit or melt into the crowd. The COMPANY sing]

No. 1 All The World's A Stage

Company *Human heads on the spikes make a grisly view*
[Heads are jiggled, crowd excited/disgusted]
Steal anything and they may well execute you
[Frightened thief pushed forward and jeered]
Plague all around killing parents, children too
[Plague victim screams, collapses]
See the sights of London. See the sights.
Vicious dogs ripping vicious dogs and bears
[Bear on chain moves in and of excited crowd]
St. Paul's church where the drunks and pimps they sell wares
[Drunk and prostitute argue/fight]
Pee or puke by that duke because no-one cares
[Nobleman enraged at impolite urchin]
See the sights of London. See the sights.
Every person's a player, every life is a play
Every street is a scenic treat with a show-time beat every day
Every life is a story of love, hope, grief and rage
Every person's a player, all the world is a stage.

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Criminals	<i>We're the low life, we're in strife, we're so bad The low bred, no bread class.</i>
Wealthy	<i>We're the wealthy, more healthy, we're part mad The well bred, well fed class.</i>
Workers	<i>We're the workers, no shirkers, we're not glad The warhead, sorehead class</i>
Company	<i>We're the actors, performers, the players In life's most tragic farce.</i>

[COMPANY enact their lives. Chorus is repeated Song ends. Stirring finale. COMPANY exit in many directions during exit music. Lighting dims. WITCH 1 is lit and addresses audience. Speak over the exit music if possible to keep the show moving. TEACHER enters in darkness]

Witch 1	<i>Welcome to our tale of love, romance, freshly baked bread and murder. Welcome to the heart of England and the busy market town of Stratford by the river Avon. [Light dims. Crossfade to Witch 2]</i>
Witch 2	<i>The year is 1572, our Queen is Elizabeth the First and everything you're about to see is absolutely true. [New voice] Well, almost. [Light dims. Crossfade to Witch 3]</i>
Witch 3	<i>It's six a.m. and the boys at Stratford Grammar are about to start school. Let's enter their classroom remembering that, "Some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them". [FX Bell rings] [Light dims on WITCH 3 who exits. MUSIC BEGINS. Lights rise on smallish part of stage. School boys - aged 10-14 - at Stratford Grammar enter and stand or sit on floor or benches facing front. TEACHER stands watching the students enter. They sing]</i>

No. 2 Latin Lovers

Students	<i>Up at five, come alive, say a simple prayer Farewell folks, no more jokes, enter schoolroom bare Just a bench, not a wench, school is just for boys Read and write, get it right, learning has such joys. [Faster tempo] Latin we learn in school, declension's the golden rule. Habeas corpus, never to warp us, Latin we learn in school. Maybe a little time for history but barely any time for sport There's little time for our geography, we've got pronouns to sort. Non sequitur! Latin we learn in school, for writers a triffic tool To know ipse dixit, helps you to fix it Latin we learn in school. ... if not we burn in, Latin we learn in school. Ole! [Dialogue over music. Excerpt adapted from The Merry Wives of Windsor]</i>
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Teacher	<i>[Welsh accent]</i> How many numbers is in nouns?
Students	Two.
Teacher	What is fair?
Students	<i>Pulcher.</i>
Teacher	What is <i>lapis</i> ?
Students	A stone.
Teacher	And what is a stone?
Students	A pebble.
Teacher	<i>[Angry]</i> No! It is <i>lapis</i> .
Students	It is <i>lapis</i> .
Teacher	What is he, William Shakespeare, that does lend articles?
Shakespeare	<i>[Young WILLIAM stands]</i> Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined. <i>Singulariter nominativo: 'hic, haec, hoc'.</i>
Teacher	And what is your genitive case plural?
Shakespeare	<i>Genitivo: 'horum, haram, horum'.</i> <i>[WILLIAM sits]</i>
Teacher	Now, declensions of pronouns. <i>'qui, que, quod'.</i>
Students	<i>'qui, que, quod' - thanks be to God.</i> <i>[They sing again. Song ends. Bell sounds]</i>
Teacher	Five o'clock. The end of another school day. We begin tomorrow morning at six. Good evening, boys.
Students	<i>[Stand as one]</i> Good evening, sir. <i>[They turn and slowly exit in solemn formation. Suddenly they yell and exit running delighted to be out of school. They could even do a lap or part thereof of the stage, even bump into WITCH 1. Lights dim. TEACHER exits. Bench, if used, is removed. WITCH 1 is lit. WILLIAM enters in darkness]</i>
Witch 1	The mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon is John Shakespeare. A good man, he makes gloves for a living and dabbles a little in selling wool.
Witch 2	<i>[Crossfade lights. Up on WITCH 2]</i> But Mayor Shakespeare's a total loser at business. He's up to his chain of office in debt. And he's got a wife and kids to support. That was his son William doing the latin routine in school. <i>[Lights up on WILLIAM who is frozen at the side of the stage]</i> And speak of the devil. <i>[Crossfade lights. Up on WITCH 3]</i>
Witch 3	<i>[Referring to WILLIAM]</i> Young Will's wending his way home to Mum and Dad in Henley Street. <i>[To WILLIAM]</i> I wouldn't run if was you, Will. The folks are havin' a bit of a domestic. <i>[Grimaces]</i> <i>[Crossfade lights. Down on WITCH/ES, up on JOHN and MARY where JOHN stands/sits diagonally facing front. MARY is upstage. WILLIAM is frozen UC. Parents are worried]</i>
John	It's no use, Mary. I might be the mayor of Stratford but that doesn't stop my creditors or those damn, snoopy parishioners.
Mary	We could sell the property my father left me?
John	<i>[Shaking head]</i> No, I won't do that.

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Mary Oh John, I warned you about borrowing money. It's so risky.
John I don't want the children to know.
Mary Well fat chance there is of that. You're the mayor who's stopped going to council. The whole town knows.
John But if I go to council, my creditors hound me. And the same goes for church.
Mary But at least you can only be *sacked* by the council. If you don't go to church they'll think you're a secret Catholic. *[Pause. MARY worried]* Oh you're not!
John Be quiet. And never discuss this in front of the children, especially William.
[WILLIAM comes alive and moves to his parents. Fade UC light. ACTORS enter in upstage darkness and wait C]
William *[Excited]* Father, Mother, I've just seen the most fantastic thing. In the market place there's a group of men. I think they're actors.
Mary Hello son. *[She embraces WILLIAM who is bursting with enthusiasm]*
John They're strolling players, the Earl of Leicester's Men.
William They've got costumes and swords and masks and drums and everything. Can I go and watch them? Can I? Can I? Please?
Mary Your father will take you tomorrow.
William But I want to go now. Oh please. I promise I'll come straight home.
Mary Oh go on, John. Let him go.
John *[Gives in]* Okay. But see you come straight home.
William *[Thrilled]* Yes! *[Hurriedly kissing parents]* Thank you. Thank you. *[Starts to exit]* I can't wait to see what they do. It's brilliant! See ya! *[Exits]*
Mary We should be thankful our eldest child is healthy and full of life. One day he'll make a fine glover just like you.
John *[Scoffs]* A glover! Wake up, woman. He's not like us. He goes to school. He can read and write. He's got big ideas.
Mary But he's a good boy. He'll do what's right for his family.
John Maybe. *[Actors mutter in the darkness]* Time'll tell.
[Lights fade on JOHN and MARY who exit. Crossfade lights C where troupe of actors are unpacking from large trunk. NOTE. The actors playing the ACTORS in this scene could double as the actors in the London group later joined by Shakespeare. The muttering before the last scene ends helps link the scenes, helps keep the story moving and at a brisk pace]
Actor 1 Careful with those costumes, Charley. That one cost the earth.
Actor 4 *[Stop picking on me]* I'm careful, all right?! Stop pickin' on me.
Actor 2 What play are we doing? And don't say that old religious thing again. *[WILLIAM enters and watches]*
Actor 3 *[From inside/behind trunk stands up wearing horse's head]* I say, I say, I say. I'd like to horse around. *[Removes horse's head]* Da-dah! *[Ignored. Gets on with unloading]* All right, please y'self!

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Actor 1 And you mind those props. Damage that, lad, and you're a gelding.
Actor 2 [*Sees WILLIAM*] Well, hello there, young fella. What's your name?
William [*Moving closer*] William, sir.
Actor 2 [*Gentle mocking*] William, sir. Sure that ain't *Sir* William?
Actor 1 Hey, you. Clear off, son. We're busy. [*Returns to work*]
Actor 2 [*To WILLIAM*] Don't mind him. He's just a frustrated actor, manager, playwright and general dogsbody who ain't had his supper.
Actor 3 [*Holding up crown*] Hey. Shouldn't this 'ave more jewels?
[*Others stop what they're doing and look at crown*]
William My father's the mayor.
Actor 1 If that's broken, matey, I'll ...
[*Stops in mid-sentence. All ACTORS freeze and turn to look at WILLIAM*]
William [*Pause. Speaks confidently*] My name's William Shakespeare and my father's the mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon.
Actor 4 [*Impressed*] Your old man's the mayor? [*WILLIAM nods*]
Actor 2 [*Sees WILLIAM in new light*] Here? In Stratford? [*WILLIAM nods*]
[*ACTORS surround WILLIAM. They are suddenly very friendly. The mayor determines their site, if they're allowed to perform - their RATE OF PAY*]
Actor 1 William Shakespeare hey? That's a fine name. [*OTHERS agree "Fine name" etc*] And what are you going to be when you grow up, William?
William I help my father in his work. He makes beautiful gloves.
Actor 2 Ah, that's a fine trade, William. You'll be a first-class craftsman.
Actor 3 Just like the old man, 'ey? [*Other ACTORS agree*]
William Perhaps. But sometimes I think I might like to be something else.
Actor 1 [*Playing a game*] Ooo, I know, I know. You're going to be a butcher.
[*OTHERS scoff. "A butcher!"*] No, a teacher. No, no. A priest.
[*The other ACTORS laugh. WILLIAM smiles but shakes his head*]
Actor 2 Get real. The Reverend William Shakespeare. Never. He's going to sell Stratford's finest ales ... and be a publican! [*Laughter/teasing*]
Actor 3 Nonsense. The lad's got a mind like a razor. He'll be ... a gentleman!
Actors [*All teasing in a kind way*] Ooooo. A gentleman. Ooooo.
William Perhaps. [*ACTORS settle*] They all sound very interesting. But I've decided. [*Pause*] I'm going to be an actor.
[*ACTORS stunned. Genuine concern*]
Actor 1 [*Shocked. Gasps*] An actor?
William Yes. A strolling player. Just like you.
Actor 4 Dear child, have you gone mad? Are you insane?
Actor 2 [*Upset*] We're vagabonds, gypsies, tramps, the lowest of the low.
Actor 3 [*Distressed*] Shunned by au-forities, scorned by universities, despised by the Church. Think well, my boy. This ain't no occupation.
Actors It's a life! [*MUSIC BEGINS*]
[*ACTORS drag box DC produce shortish boards. You could have a mini stage simply dragged out from the wings or just mime the construction of a stage.*]

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The fewer props the better. WILLIAM becomes the audience and the song is directed at him. He might sit on a barrel/trunk]

William

What are you doing?

Actor 4

These are boards, William. We place the boards together and make a stage. And then *[Make the dialogue fit the opening music]*

No. 3 Treading the Boards

Actor 1

*Everybody's got to have a job
Earn their living, make an honest bob*

Actor 2

*Everybody's got to go to work
No forgiving if you're gonna shirk*

Actor 3

We chose our occupation carefully

Troupe

*A noble troupe of thespians are we.
We're treading the boards, just treading the boards
We practise histrionic art
We entertain hordes from lackeys to lords
Our jester will gesture and play every part.
The pay is pathetic, we're on if we get sick
And hope and pray some patron applauds
It's comic and tragic, the theatre is magic
When tread, tread, treading the boards.
Tread, tread, tread, treading the boards.*

[TROUPE act out simple melodrama at bar 48 then at bar 80 invite WILLIAM to join them. "Come on, son .. Up you come .. Of course it's all right" etc. WILLIAM dances then sings with players. He loves it. Be great if he can tap. This number is a joyful celebration of showbiz and it should really fire the young Stratford boy - give him something to dream about, to get excited about. Song ends with ACTORS and WILLIAM in frozen pose. MARY enters as applause dies]

Mary

*[Stands and delivers. She's cross] William Shakespeare! [ACTORS cringe]
[Immediate action. Lights fade DC as the ACTORS bundle props into trunk and exit. WILLIAM crosses to his mother. He is excited. He now knows he wants to be an actor. MARY is dressed for church. We have gone forward to next Sunday. Worshippers enter in darkness and gather upstage]*

William

Oh mother, it's stupendous, it's awesome! I'm going to be an actor.

Mary

Not today you're not. Today you're going to church.

William

But mother. There are stories and travel and adventure and ...

Mary

That's enough. Your family and the law are far more important than this nonsense about play-acting.

William

[Polite defiance] It's not nonsense, mother. It's what I want to do.

Mary

You'll do as you're told. The Shakespeares go to church every Sunday. We sit in the front pew. Today. *Now!*

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[MUSIC BEGINS. They exit. Spot C. VICAR steps into it and begins singing/speaking. When rap intro ends, bring up lights as congregation move into church. They might be there already. The SHAKESPEARES could enter UC when others are settled. JOHN could be wearing mayoral robe. WILLIAM'S siblings - if used - with approx. ages are GILBERT 10, JOAN 8, ANNE 5 and RICHARD 3. No seats need be used. Make use of boxes/rostra for varying levels. Maybe bench from school or props from players in previous scene. VICAR could be on a box a la pulpit]

No. 4 C of E

Vicar [Rap style. Yo, bro] *Welcome people, share a smile, Holy Trinity, Stratford style
Sabbath comes but once a week,
Worship 'specially for the meek
Vicar, congregation too, All we need is little old you
Prayers to pray and songs to sing
Okay folks now let's begin. [LIGHTS UP on congregation here or*]
King Henry told the Pope to go
I want my own church, don't you know
A local, vocal English show
And so we're C of E. [*or here]*

Company *And so we're C of E, and so we're C of E
A local, vocal English show and so we're C of E.*

Churchgoer 1 *We go to church to show we're just
In God and Monarch both we trust
The law is sure we can't ignore the
Good ol' C of E.*

Company *The good ol' C of E. The good ol' C of E
The law is sure we can't ignore the good ol' C of E.*

Churchgoer 2 *Our church was once a shining light
With tapestries and candles bright
King Henry's gruff, that stuff ain't right
And now we're C of E.*

Company *And now we're C of E. And now we're C of E
King Henry's gruff, that stuff ain't right
And now we're C of E*

Vicar *The bible's full of triffic tales
Of curses, verses, giant whales
And Abel's fable's full of wails
Within the C of E.*

Company *Within the C of E. Within the C of E.
And Abel's fable's full of wails within the C of E.*

John Shaksp. *Now some of us we live in hope
That one day we'll get back our Pope
And each such dope will swing on rope*

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Company *Unless they're C of E.
Unless they're C of E. Unless they're C of E
And each such dope will swing on rope
Unless they're C of E.
Oh yes we're C of E. Oh yes we're C of E
The King's ring fling did bring this thing
Oh yes we're C of E!*
[During instrumental break, maybe hold mock execution. Noose dangled in front of JOHN who is terrified. Noose removed. Song ends with congregation happy. BLACKOUT. COMPANY exit. WITCH 1 steps into spot DR]

Witch 1 We live in perilous times. Steal anything worth more than seven pence and be hanged. Be a Catholic and y'middle name's Martyr. And not just here in Stratford. Everywhere in England people are touched by religion.
[Her spot dims]

Witch 2 *[Steps into new light]* Henry the Eighth wanted *another* divorce, the Pope said "no" so Henry created the C of E, made himself boss and gave himself a divorce. Hence the current suspicion, hatred and bloodshed all in the name of religion. *[Her spot dims]*

Witch 3 *[Steps into new light]* Now Henry's daughter, Elizabeth, our present Queen, has followed in Daddy's C of E footsteps. This upset the Pope no end. He called Lizzy a heretic and ex-communicated her. Wow! Needless to say, the Pope isn't flavour of the month here in England. *[Light dims]*

Witch 1 *[Her light returns]* And here's the paradox. Some English folk are loyal to their monarch *and* their Catholic faith. That's dangerous. To be a Catholic in England in 1582 was a capital offence!
[Squeal and laughter heard upstage in darkness. WITCH 2 is lit]

Witch 2 But life ain't all doom and gloom. Sex was still alive and well. And that young kid, William Shakespeare, the one keen on acting, well he's no longer a kid. He's hit the ripe old age of eighteen.
[WITCH light dims. LIGHTS UP on WILLIAM and ANNE HATHAWAY sitting, holding hands and courting]

Witch 3 *[Her light returns]* And his passion for acting's been replaced by his passion for passion. The theatre's out and sex is in. You know, a famous writer once wrote, "The course of true love never did run smooth".
[Indicates couple] Let's see if it's true.
[Immediate squeal/laughter from COUPLE. LIGHTS off WITCH 3 who exits. Set lights on couple. The actor now playing WILLIAM is the older actor]

William Come on, Annie. Stop muckin' about. Give us a kiss.
[He tries but she won't co-operate]

Anne Not till you tell me about Anne Whately of Temple Grafton.

William Who?

Anne You heard.

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William Never heard of her. Now listen to me you gorgeous girl.
Anne *Girl!* That's a joke. Do you know how old I am?
William No and I don't care. All I want are your luscious lips. Now come here!
[He tries to grab her. She moves, avoiding his clutches]
Anne I'm twenty-six, Will. I'm not exactly an old maid but I'm carrying on with some slip of a lad just out of school.
William Carrying on? Is that what we're doing? *[Goes to her]* Oooh, I like it. Let's carry on. *[She's reluctant]* Oh come on, Annie. You know I love you.
Anne *[Pause]* I sure hope you do, Will, 'cos there's something you oughta know. *[MUSIC BEGINS. She leads him back to seat]*
William Oh yeah? And what might that be?

No. 5 Back To Front

Anne *I'm a comely lass age of twenty-six
You're my favourite lad but you're full of tricks
And because of you I am in a fix
I've got a bun in the oven. [WILLIAM shocked]*

William *I'm a likely lad only just eighteen
And about you dear, I am rather keen
But this piece of news it was unforeseen
You've got a bun in the oven? [She nods. He doesn't mind]*

Duet *But that's how it sometimes is
No use getting in a tizz.
First you approach the vicar, tell him that you wish to wed.
He reads the banns out, speak up who has doubt
Then down the aisle you tread.
Next try the grog and goodies
Follow with a grope and grunt [He pinches her, she squeals]
It's supposed to be marriage then mating
But we've got it back to front.*

Anne *I'm a simple lass, barely write or read
Though can cook and sew and a garden weed
But we're going to have an extra mouth to feed
I've got a bun in the oven.*

William *I'm a steady type at a tender age
And had rather hoped to go on the stage
But for now I must other plans engage
She's got a bun in the oven.*

Duet *But that's how it sometimes is
No use getting in a tizz. [etc]*
[During instrumental music, VICAR enters. Dialogue over music]

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Vicar Ah, my children.
William Vicar, we have news.
Anne We wish to marry.
Vicar Splendid. I'll announce the banns on Sunday.
William Ah, could you expedite matters.
Vicar *[Touch worried]* Expedite!
Anne He means get a move on.
William You see, she's in a delicate condition.
Vicar *[More worried]* Delicate condition!
Anne He means I'm up the spout!
Vicar *[No big deal]* Oh! You've got a bun in the oven! *[Happiness all round]*
[Vicar joins them in fun repeat of chorus]
Vicar *[Sung]* I now pronounce you man and wife.
Trio *We've got it back to, We've got it back to, we've got it back to front!*

[BLACKOUT. Trio exit during last bars of song. WITCH 1 steps into spot DL. JOHN and MARY enter in darkness DR]
Witch 1 So Anne Hathaway, 26, married her teenage lover, William Shakespeare, 18. They weren't wealthy and did what many young married couples did – they moved in with the folks.
Witch 2 *[Steps into spot]* In this case, William's folks in downtown Henley Street. And yes, the house is still standing today and is absolutely chockers with tourists from Japan, Australia, the United States, Sweden, South Africa, South America, South Everywhere.
Witch 3 *[Spot picks her out]* Mind you, the house was fairly crowded even in those days. There was John and Mary, the newlyweds William and Anne, William's younger siblings and, *[FX Baby cry]* of course, the first grandchild, a girl, Susanna. And life wasn't always rosy. *[Fade light on WITCH. Crossfade light up DR where JOHN is seated facing diagonally front. MARY beside/behind him. They are worried]* So let's return to Henley Street and catch up with the family Shakespeare.
[Exits into darkness]
John *[Argues]* But this time I'm *hopelessly* in debt. I'm gunna go to jail.
Mary It's never hopeless, John. And don't you dare die and leave your family with debts!
John William's the key. If he supports me, I *might* just make it.
Mary But we can't rely on William. He's restless, he's got ideas.
John He's got a wife and a child for God's sake. Children must support their parents. Especially a son his father.
Mary *[Looking offstage]* Here he is now. Just go easy. You know he's got a mind of his own.
William *[Enters]* Hello Mother. Father. *[Pause. Senses something is wrong]* What's wrong? What's happened?

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Mary Nothing. Your father's still worried about his debts. How's Susanna?
William She's fine and I've got news on that front.
John Here's some free advice, son. Neither a borrower nor lender be.
Mary *[Keen to know]* What news?
John My debts are killing me, William. More than ever I need you here in Stratford.
Mary *[Keener]* William? What news?
William *[Distracted but back to his Mother]* Ah, it's Anne. She's pregnant again.
Mary *[Delighted]* Oh William, that's wonderful.
John *[Not happy]* Yeah, great. *Another* mouth to feed.
Mary This time you'll have a boy. I know you'll have a son.
Anne *[Enters obviously pregnant]* Who's having a son?
John *[Changes mood, fussing]* Ah, here Anne, *[Offers chair]* sit yourself down.
Anne *[She sits]* Thank you father-in-law.
Mary *[Fussing]* William's just told us the news. We're so happy. Aren't we, John?
John Oh f'sure. We're over the bloody moon.
[Pause. There is tension in the room. WILLIAM covers up]
William Mother seems convinced we'll have a boy.
Anne Well she's doubled her chances. I'm expecting twins.
[MARY delighted, WILLIAM stunned, JOHN despairs]
Trio Twins!
William *[Shocked]* But that means I'll have three kids before I'm twenty-one.
Anne Really? Here was I thinking the woman had the kids.
William *[Frustrated]* Oh you know what I mean, Anne. We've got no money, I've got no trade, Dad's in debt. What am I going to do?
John You'll do what any good father would do. Take a steady job in Stratford and care for your wife and kids.
Mary You know you can stay as long as you like. Our home is your home.
William *[Distressed]* But I can't stay. It's not what I want to do. *[OTHERS upset]*
John Can't!?! What do you mean 'can't'?
Anne *[To her in-laws]* Your son and heir has dreams of being someone better than a simple glover in a quiet country town.
William *[Upset]* Aw come on, Annie, that's not fair.
Mary Something better? What could be better than raising a family?
John Listen William, I'm in real trouble. I need you. Please. You must stay and help.
[Pause. Tension. WILLIAM is deeply trouble]
William *[Quietly]* I can't stay. *[OTHERS despair]*
Anne Will, please. Don't leave me with three babies.
Mary They're *your* babies, son. You brought them into the world, you must provide for them, your wife and your parents.

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William But you know how I feel. You know I want to be an actor.
[TRIO despair]

Mary There's no future in acting. No security.
John You're responsible for your family.
William Don't you think I know that? Don't you think I know about loyalty and responsibility? I will *always* care for you - all of you - but I have to do this thing.

John With what? You've got no money.
Mary Dreams are fine, William. But children need food.
William I'll send you money. *[They despair]* I'll help pay your debts.
John But acting's not a trade. You'll starve.
Anne And so will your children. Do you want your children to die?
William *[MUSIC BEGINS]* It's something I have to do. You know that. At least let me try. If I don't, I'll be the most miserable man in England. Please, just one chance. Please.
[This song could be a duet with the younger WILLIAM entering quietly and singing with his older namesake]

No. 6 There Is Something Out There

William *There is something out there, something I can feel
Something that I know for sure is real.
There is something out there, lighting up my sky
Something that I know can help me fly.
There is something waiting, waiting just for me
Something that I know can set me free.
That this something out there, surely you can see
Something for me.
Sit around, stay at home, watch the time go by
Not for me, must be free, give my luck a try.
There is something out there, life is there to live.
Something very special I can give.
There is someone calling, can't you hear the cry?
Something I must answer, I must try.
There is something out there, help me to begin
Something I must conquer, I must win.
There is something out there, it's my destiny
Something for me!*

[Song ends. BLACKOUT. SHAKESPEARES exit in darkness. MUSIC BEGINS. WITCH 1 steps into her spot and speaks over soft music]

No. 7 All The World's A Stage – Instrumental Reprise

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Witch 1 *[WITCH 1 speaks at bar 3. Crossfade lights for each new WITCH speech]*
We're back in the city of plague, pickpockets and poverty. Elizabethan London, circa 1588 and the young man from Stratford has finally hit town. Shakespeare's in London. *[Crossfade lights, up on WITCH 2]*

Witch 2 We're not sure what Shakespeare did after Stratford. Some say he became a teacher in Lancashire. Others reckon he met more actors and again got the urge to tread the boards.

Witch 3 Whatever he did, he's now in London unemployed and hungry. But is he ready for the theatre? Is the theatre ready for him? *[Light up on WILLIAM]*
Break a leg, Will.
[Lights crossfade. Down on WITCH/ES, up on London street. You could have a few folk about or light a small part and have only the two actors. WILLIAM is impressed by and lost in the big city. Suddenly his name is called]

Field Will? Will Shakespeare? *[FIELD moves towards WILLIAM]* It's me, Richard. Richard Field.

William *[Shaking hands delighted to find a friendly face]* Richard Field. Mate. How are you?

Field I'm very well. Even better seeing an old mate from Stratford. So what are you doing in London?

William *[You don't want to know]* Don't ask. It's a long story.

Field How's your family? How's the Mayor of Stratford?

William Dad's fine. He's retired. And Mum, Anne and the kids are all fit and well.

Field I heard a whisper you married Anne Hathaway.

William And we've got three lovely children. Two girls and a boy. All healthy, thank God.

Field Three kids. Bloody hell. We're getting old, mate. So come on, what brings you to London?

William Don't give me a hard time, Richard, but I want to be an actor.

Field That doesn't surprise me.

William *[Pleasantly surprised]* Really?

Field You were always clowning around at school or watching those strolling players.

William *[Emotional]* Richard, I know people heap scorn on actors, I know their life is miserable and the pay's ridiculous.

Field Hey, I'm on your side.

William But there's something in my blood. I don't *want* to be an actor. I *have* to be one. And if you can help me or know someone, anyone, I'll love you forever.

Field Well I'm just a printer, Will, but I have printed plays.

William *[Excited]* Plays! You've printed plays?

Field Sure. Actors always want new plays.

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William But if you've printed plays you must know some actors.
Field A few. Would you like an introduction?
William *[Thrilled]* Would I? Is the Pope a Catholic?
Field *[Whispers]* Shhh. No religious jokes.
William *[Likewise whispers]* Richard, you've saved my life!
Field Hardly, it's only an introduction. Look mate, I've gotta go. *[Exiting]* I'll tell the actors to expect you tomorrow at three. They'll be in the pub. They're *always* in the pub. *[Stops]* Oh and Will ... welcome to London. *[Waves as he exits]*

William *[Calling]* Thanks mate! See ya.
[WILLIAM thrilled. Holds up hand to wave. He freezes as lights come up DL where group of actors are gathered. They could be the same used in the Stratford troupe. WILLIAM turns to watch before slowly lowering his hand]

Gough *[Angry]* Oh not another female role. I'm sick of being a bloody woman.
Heminges *[Mock threat]* Hey! You be who we say, Sunshine, or on y'bike.
Gough But I'm too old to play women. I've got a beard. Look, look. *[Pats face]* Facial foliage. Whiskers. Fluff.
Burbage Yeah, bum fluff. *[Laughter, teasing. CONDELL sees WILLIAM]*
Condell Who's that? *[OTHERS look. Calls to WILLIAM]* Can we help you, mate?
[WILLIAM moves to group]

William *[Nervous]* My name's William Shakespeare. A friend said you're looking for an actor.

Gough We are if you look good in a dress.
Heminges Ever done any acting before?
William Not much, but I'm keen to learn. *[Some of the OTHERS ignore him]*
Burbage *[Extends hand, goes to WILLIAM]* Richard Burbage.
William *[Shaking hands with BURBAGE]* Will Shakespeare.
Burbage Welcome Will Shakespeare. So you want to be an actor?
William I do, really. I'm serious. It's been my dream ever since I was a kid. *[OTHERS smirk, scoff. BURBAGE is serious]*

Burbage So what's so special about acting?
William It's just something I've always loved. I think it's in m'blood. *[Some OTHERS let smirk become laugh. WILLIAM confused]*
Gough *[Mimics WILLIAM]* I think it's in m'blood. *[More laughter]*
Condell It might be in y'blood, mate, but are you any good?
[Suddenly/quickly WILLIAM is dressed. He's confused]

Heminges *[Thrusting sword at WILLIAM]* Here's your sword, m'lord.
Burbage *[Placing crown on WILLIAM]* And your crown, Majesty.
Condell Now give us a speech. And be quick about it.
William *[Confused]* I'm sorry. I'm not sure what to say.
Gough Put 'im in a frock! Make him a girlie.
Burbage Show us y'stuff, Will Shakespeare. Let's see if you can act.

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- [Pause. All attention on WILLIAM who looks at the others. This is a test, an audition. Suddenly he stands tall and delivers an impassioned speech. Maybe spot lighting on him for the speech]*
- William** So burn the turrets of this cursed town,
Flame to the highest region of the air,
And kindle heaps of exhaltations,
That being fiery meteors, may presage
Death and destruction to th'inhabitants!
Flying dragons, lightning, fearful thunder-claps,
Singe these fair plains, and make them seem as black
As is the island where the Furies mask,
Compass'd with Lethe, Styx, and Phlegethon,
Because my dear Zenocrate is dead!
[Part of speech by King Tamburline from Christopher Marlowe's play Tamburline. Part 2. Act 3 Scene 2. Zenocrate is Tamburline's wife. Instant applause from OTHERS who are genuinely impressed with WILLIAM'S declamatory, convincing performance. WILLIAM is feeling good. They clap then backslap him but hardly get started when they suddenly freeze. Devise a signal for this. Perhaps a movement from BURBAGE. WITCH 1 is lit]
- Witch 1** Not bad for a beginner. And so the glover's son left Stratford, his parents,
wife and children determined to crack the big-time in London. It did
happen. But it didn't happen overnight.
- Witch 2** *[Is lit]* Some scribblers tell us young Will worked for nothing minding
horses outside London theatres, wangled his way backstage and finally
on stage. But however it happened, it happened.
- Witch 3** *[Is lit]* It probably took Will years of reading, dreaming and travelling
before he finally got his chance to act. But when he did, what a cushy life
he chose. Short hours, big bucks, universal acclaim and non-stop
glamour. You wish.
*[Immediately ACTORS attack WILL. Light fades on WITCHES who exit. Acting
troupe and WILLIAM come alive. ACTORS move in, remove his props and
bombard him with rapid-fire dialogue without pauses. WILLIAM is vocally
assaulted. Start slowish and quietish and build the dialogue]*
- Condell** Listen, Will. Before you take the thespian plunge, consider a few facts.
We sometimes stage six different plays a week.
- Heminges** Every six months we stage about thirty plays, half of which are brand
new.
- Burbage** A trainee actor plays a hundred parts in a season. A leading actor learns
eight hundred lines for a main part and oversees five thousand lines in a
week.
- Gough** You can even be a bloke with boobs, darling.
- Condell** You learn lines and movements and perform fight scenes with great
whackin' swords.

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Heminges	F'get to duck, pal, and you're history.
Gough	You've gotta be in love, in war, insane and in drag.
Burbage	There are costumes, props and characters.
Condell	You'll be painting, building, loading, travelling, prompting and directing <i>before</i> you start acting.
Heminges	You must be punctual and sober. If not, your life is hell.
Gough	Late for rehearsals, fined two days' wages.
Heminges	Miss a rehearsal, fined one weeks' wages.
Burbage	Late for performance, fined one and a half weeks' wages.
Condell	Drunk on stage, fined five weeks' wages.
Gough	Miss a performance, fined ten weeks' wages.
Heminges	And steal, damage or lose any expensive costume, think seriously about emigration.
Condell	Fined five years' wages.
Burbage	But don't let that put you off. Acting's a noble profession. So noble that one day you might even perform for Her Majesty, the Queen!
Actors	<i>[Raise hand in salute or hand on heart]</i> The Queen! <i>[MUSIC BEGINS. ACTORS scamper off as lights crossfade. Down DL, up UR. QUEEN ELIZABETH enters in magnificent costume followed by several ladies-in-waiting. A throne is placed DL. During song she could ascend her throne. She could enter through the auditorium]</i>

No. 8 Who Wants To Marry Me?

Queen	<i>I am old England's monarch, I'm Elizabeth the first My daddy had a lot of wives and looked as though he'd burst. But I am somewhat sinister, a spin-i-ster quite free I wonder is there anyone who wants to marry me?</i>
Ladies	<i>But she is somewhat sinister, a spin-i-ster quite free We wonder is there anyone who wants to marry me?</i>
Queen	<i>My mummy was sweet Anne Boleyn, Pa's second wife to woo But Daddy did not fancy her and had her chopped in two That kind of law does nothing for a monarch's sense of glee I wonder is there anyone who wants to marry me?</i>
Ladies	<i>That kind of law does nothing for a monarch's sense of glee We wonder is there anyone who wants to marry me?</i>
Queen	<i>Some royalty across the sea have tried my hand to win And local lads put on their pads to put me in a spin But through it all they've missed the ball, the best they got was tea I wonder is there anyone who wants to marry me?</i>
Ladies	<i>But through it all they've missed the ball, the best they got was tea We wonder is there anyone who wants to marry me?</i>
Queen	<i>Now every gent in parliament for me is in despair</i>

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- They want to know will Lizzy go and have a little heir
I'll not be bossed, my legs are crossed, I've thrown away the key
No wonder there is nobody who wants to marry me.*
- Ladies** *I'll not be bossed, my legs are crossed, I've thrown away the key
No wonder there is nobody who wants to marry me!*
- [Short instrumental coda allowing QUEEN to be prepared and LADIES arranged. CECIL FALSINGHAM enters and crosses to a sarcastic QUEEN. He bows obsequiously. LADIES may take no notice of following dialogue]*
- Falsingham** Your Majesty, disturbing news. Catholic Spaniards are building a great Armada and plan to invade.
- Queen** Your spies at work, Mister Secretary?
- Falsingham** Treacherous times, M'am in which we safeguard your person and country.
- Queen** Forget the Spanish. Bunch of bovine bover boys. What else?
- Falsingham** English Catholics, Majesty.
- Queen** You oxymoron! You can't be English *and* Catholic.
- Falsingham** Englishmen go abroad, train as Jesuit priests then return to England.
- Queen** Well stuff that for a game of soldiers!
- Falsingham** English Catholics, M'am, may revolt against your Church of England.
- Queen** So what are you doing about it?
- Falsingham** A crackdown, M'am. Attendance at a Catholic Mass, twelve months in jail. Failure to regularly attend C of E services, fined one year's wages.
- Queen** Ah, good old religious persecution. Daddy would be pleased. And what of these Catholic priests?
- Falsingham** Why, public execution, of course.
- Queen** Of course. *[Looks around then intimately]* What's the latest juicy goss?
- Falsingham** I regret, M'am, we suspect the Earl of Essex.
- Queen** Essex! Bollocks! He had the hots for me.
- Falsingham** He secretly meets the Earl of Southampton.
[Suddenly crowd noises are heard. Not very loud but they increase]
- Elizabeth** *[Rising. LADIES rise]* Well keep spying on Essex and Southampton.
[Exiting] Carry on, Mister Secretary. Carry on. *[LADIES follow her]*
- Falsingham** *[Bowling deeply. Drawn out]* Majesty.
[Noisy CROWD spills onto stage. CECIL departs in haste perhaps being chased. We're back in a London street. A man is pushed forward dressed in black. His hands are tied. He is placed on a box. CROWD continue jeering]
- Official** *[Announcing but without histrionics]* For the crime of being a Catholic priest you are sentenced to death. *[CROWD cheer]* You will be taken to the gallows and hung by your neck. *[More cheers]* You will be taken down whilst still alive and your genitals cut off. *[More cheers]* You will be cut open, your bowels removed and burned before your eyes. *[Cheer]* And may God have mercy on your soul.

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[Biggest cheer. Jeering continues as priest is pushed off box and led away. CROWD follows jeering/talking. As the CROWD disperse, we see WILLIAM. He has been a part of the crowd. Another spectator stops near him]

Spectator Nice day for a hangin'? Don't y' just love all this blood and guts?

William *[Distressed and distracted]* Sorry?

Spectator *[Starts to leave]* Come on. You don't wanna miss the hangin'.

William Ah, you go. I've gotta get home.

Spectator *[Stops. Accuses]* Hey, you're one of them. You're a bloody Catholic.

William *[Defensive]* No. I'm not. I'm Church of England. God bless the Queen.

Burbage *[Enters quickly]* Will! I've been looking everywhere for you.

Spectator Stay away from 'im, mate. He's a bleedin' Catholic. *[Exits]*

William Richard, I've just seen some wretch about to be executed for his faith. The man's a priest and for that, the Queen has him killed.

Burbage *[Worried]* Keep your voice down, man. There are spies everywhere.

William But Richard, all this bloodlust and death - it's appalling.

Burbage You mean appealing. An execution's the most popular show in town.

William But it's grotesque. It's public torture and murder.

Burbage It's the law, Will. English justice.

William But it's barbaric and what's worse, the people love it!

Burbage Exactly. They love plays with buckets of blood. So what about that gory piece you're writing?

William *[Defensive]* Oh, that's nothing. Anyway, I'm an actor not a writer.

Burbage Will, listen. You were born for the stage. But you can also write. That speech you added last week was terrific.

William *[Shrugs]* Maybe.

Burbage Some rich blokes *[guys]* have booked a private gig. I've decided we're going to stage a play by William Shakespeare.

William *[Shocked, excited]* You're joking.

Burbage Besides, *[Smiling]* we haven't got anything else.

William *[Friendly whack]* You bugger!

Burbage You've seen the blood and torture here in London. Write us a play with murder and barbaric evil.

William No happy ending? *[They laugh and start to exit]* Are you sure about this?

Burbage *[Teasing]* Just make sure there's a big part for me! *[They exit laughing]*
[Lights fade. Spot up DL and WITCH 1 enters. NOBLES enter in darkness and sit/stand diagonally DR facing front i.e. to the side of the performers]

Witch 1 Shakespeare was a successful actor, playing many roles. Acting was his first love. But somewhere, some time, somehow ... he started to write.

Witch 2 Shakespeare was a natural at writing. One of his first plays, if not his first, was *Titus Andronicus*. And a warning. Some viewers may find this program disturbing.

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- Witch 3** Set in ancient Rome, this gory play has corpse after bloody corpse. Shakespeare had books to research ancient history but needed little imagination to write about murder. Elizabethan England was awash with executions, persecutions and barbaric behaviour.
[Crossfade lights. Down on WITCHES who exit or join the nobles as part of the private audience. TITUS played by Condell enters as cook with tray of food covered by dome. He addresses the theatre audience, not the wealthy earls' audience, as the excerpt has not yet begun. Dim lighting on nobles]
- Titus** Good evening. *[Good afternoon for a matinee]* I'm Titus Andronicus but you can call me sir. Professional soldier, Roman general and currently at war with the Goths. But not tonight. Tonight it's cocktails, little things on sticks and a slap-up dinner party. *[Places tray on table/somewhere]* Here's the main course. Cooked it m'self. I'm a SNAG, a sensitive new age general. *[Amused at his own joke]*
- FX** *[Modern ding dong front doorbell sounds]*
- Titus** Ah, guests. *[Calling]* Come in, come in. *[TAMORA {Gough} and SATURNIUS {Heminges} enter]* Tamora.
[Titus and Tamora give society kiss, one cheek then t'other]
- Tamora** Titus, darling. Lovely to see you. Mmmm-wha. Mmmm-wha.
- Saturnius** Hi, big guy. *[They men high five]*
- Tius** *[To audience]* Meet Queen Tamora and her hunk of a hubby, the Emperor Saturnius.
- Tamora** *[Waving cutely to audience]* Hi guys.
- Saturnius** *[Macho wave]* Greetings people.
- Titus** *[To audience]* Now I know it's a tad incredible but right now my army and Tamora's army are at war.
- Tamora** We're kickin' the livin' suitcase out of each other.
- Southampton** *[Calling to actors]* I say. Is this the play by William Shakespeare? We can't understand the modern stuff. *[His cronies agree]*
- Saturnius** *[Forceful]* We haven't started yet you rich git so sit down and shut up. *[Southampton sits, miffed. Cronies mutter about bad manners, actors]*
- Tamora** *[To audience]* Now even though hubby and I are here for a free feed, things are not lovey-dovey between us and the General.
- Titus** I've just killed one of their sons.
- Saturnius** And we've just had our other two sons attack Lavinia. *[LAVINIA enters]*
- Titus** Ah, my darling daughter. *[Greets a subdued LAVINIA]*
- Tamora** *[Aside]* She won't be saying much. My boys have brutalised her and cut out her tongue. *[Evil laugh]*
- Titus** *[Aside]* And their boys won't be saying much. *[Indicating food]* I've just killed 'em and slipped 'em into tonight's main course. *[Evil laugh]*
- Southampton** *[Calling]* I say, are you *Sweeney Todd*?
- Saturnius** *[Announcing]* Enough of this pre-dinner banter. Time for the real thing.

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- Tamora** *[Announcing]* We present *Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare.
[Excerpt begins. Murmurs from Southampton and cronies. "About time, too" etc. Nobles watch in semi-darkness. Perhaps subtle light change for excerpt]
- Titus** Welcome, my gracious lord; welcome dread Queen;
Although the cheer be poor
'Twill fill your stomachs. Please you, eat of it. *[Mime eating?]*
- Tamora** We are beholden to you, good Andronicus.
- Titus** My lord the Emperor, resolve me this:
Was it well done of rash Virginius
To slay his daughter with his own right hand
Because she was enforced, stained and deflowered?
- Saturninus** It was, Andronicus.
- Titus** Your reason, mighty lord?
- Saturninus** Because the girl should not survive her shame.
- Titus** A reason might, strong, effectual;
A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant
For me, most wretched, to perform the like.
Did, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee,
And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die.
[He kills her]
- Saturninus** What hast thou done, unnatural and unkind?
- Titus** Killed her for whom my tears have made me blind.
- Saturninus** What, was she ravished? Tell who did the deed?
- Titus** Will't please you eat? Will't please your highness feed?
- Tamora** Why hast thou slain thy only daughter thus?
- Titus** Not I, 'twas Chiron and Demetrius.
They ravished her, and cut away her tongue,
- Saturninus** Go, fetch them hither to us presently.
- Titus** *[Revealing the food/heads]* Why, there they are, both baked in this pie,
Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,
Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred.
'Tis true, 'tis true, witness my knife's sharp point.
[He stabs the Empress]
- Saturninus** Die, frantic wretch, for this accursed deed. *[He kills Titus]*
[Pause. The PLAYERS rise and bow facing front. NOBLES rise and applaud enthusiastically. "Bravo" etc. PLAYERS and NOBLES mingle. SOUTHAMPTON goes to SHAKESPEARE and they are lit]
- Southampton** *[Shaking hands]* Damn fine work, Shakespeare. Congratulations.
- William** Thank you, my lord.
- Southampton** Marvellous sense of foreboding. What else have you written?
- William** Very little. I'm really an actor and not terribly confident.
- Southampton** Well damn it man, you should be. Were you at Oxford or Cambridge?

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- William** I didn't go to university, sir but I had excellent teachers at school.
- Southampton** [*Realises*] Of course. A public school education. Eton? Harrow? No, Winchester. You're a Wykehamist.
- William** Alas no, my lord. I went to the Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar School.
- Southampton** And from that tiny town with an elementary education you're able to write plays like *Titus Andronicus*? You're amazing, Shakespeare. [*Suddenly suspicious*] You're not a government spy? That playwright Christopher Marlowe's a spy.
- William** I assure you, my lord, I am not a spy.
- Southampton** I believe you. Look, Shakespeare. I like your work and I want to encourage you. When's your next play?
- William** Soon, my lord but in a public theatre.
- Southampton** [*Sarcastic*] And you think the Earl of Southampton's too proud to attend a public theatre?
- William** [*Again distressed*] No, sir, not at all.
- Southampton** We toffs can slum it, Shakespeare. Not every aristocrat's a snob.
- William** It's just the crowd. They're pretty rough. They sell food and grog during the show and some of the women are very rough.
- Southampton** [*CROWD noises begin. S'HAMPTON louder*] As are most of the men. It's called life, Shakespeare. Write about it. So, when's your next play?
- William** Thursday, my lord, at two o'clock. [*Calling*] But beware the audience! [*BLACKOUT. Crowd noises erupt. MUSIC BEGINS. WILLIAM, S'HAMPTON exit. Lights up as AUDIENCE burst in from different directions. They are full of life. The play is about to begin. They jostle for place in the stalls. They vocally attack the real audience encouraging them to join the other audience - them. They operate all over the stage [and auditorium?] but will later need to vacate performing space C/DC for the actual plays*]

No. 9 Audience

- Company** *Every ballet and play, in the sticks, on Broadway
Every pop group and troupe, every monkey with hoop
Every gala and soap, every diva and dope
Every circus and stock, every classic and schlock
Every stage, every show, every age, oughta know that
They need us.
You can smart, break your heart, it'll start when you're part
Of the audience
Buy a bun, fill with fun and tis done when you're one
With the audience
You can let emotion soar and come back again for more
You can shout, you can tout when you're out and about
With the audience.
With the bawdy, gaudy, lordy audience.*

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Must have the audience!

[Various characters confront the real audience, tell their tale/sell their wares during the instrumental break. These speeches should overlap. Start following speech at underlined words. Lots of business from the company]

- Vendor** Get your nuts, gingerbread, apples and beer. Fresh nuts. Lovely apples. Bag of nuts, two apples, all for a penny. Beer. Over 'ere. Get your beer. *[Continues ad lib until dancing starts]*
- Pimp** Beautiful women. Come on gents, try a little of what y' fancy. F'get the play. Do y'self a favour. Beautiful they is. Don't be shy. Now, what about you, sir? Beautiful. You won't regret it, matey. *[Continues ad lib until dancing starts]*
- Spectator** Come on, get it movin'. You call that acting! My old gran can do better than that. 'it 'im 'ard. 'ard!! That's more like it. We paid our penny, now give us somethin' to remember. 'it 'im!
[Continues ad lib until dancing starts. Dance break followed by repeat of chorus. Song ends with flourish. Everyone freezes facing front. WITCH 1 enters DL and is lit. Fade lights on AUDIENCE who freeze in the dim light. WITCHES could step out from the AUDIENCE]
- Witch 1** William Shakespeare the talented, hard-working actor became William Shakespeare the playwright. And his plays attracted massive crowds, often three thousand at one show. And Shakespeare gave them what they wanted.
- Witch 2** Larger than life characters, action and variety. *Titus Andronicus* had revenge, rape and murder - the next play had laughter, love and a happy ending. The young Shakespeare fathered twins, a boy and a girl and no doubt this helped him write *The Comedy of Errors*.
- Witch 3** In *Errors* we find not one but *two* sets of twins. Shakespeare often invented situations where his characters became confused. Audiences loved it. They knew more than the actors – speaking of whom
[Characters enter and address audience. WITCHES fade away. Lights up on performing space. Enter ANTIPHOLUS of EPHEUS - Condell and ANTIPHOLUS of SYRACUSE - Heminges]
- Antip Epheus** My name's Antipholus and I come from Epheus.
- Antip S'cuse** My name's Antipholus and I come from Syracuse.
- Antip Epheus** We've twins, very rich, have the same moniker and were separated at birth.
- Antip S'cuse** We don't even know the other twin exists. *[To his twin]* Do I know you?
- Antip Epheus** Wouldn't know you if I fell over you, mate.
- Antip S'cuse** And to make matters worse, we've both got a servant. *[Calling]* Oi!
[Enter DROMIO of EPHEUS and DROMIO of SYRACUSE who move beside their respective master. You could have a small sight gag. Pause. Oops. Wrong masters. The servants swap places then dive into introductions]

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Dromio Epheus My name's Dromio and I come from Epheus.

Dromio S'cuse My name's Dromio and I come from Syracuse.

Dromio Epheus We've twins, very poor, have the same moniker and were separated at birth.

Dromio S'cuse We don't even know the other twin exists. *[To his twin]* Do I know you?

Dromio Epheus Wouldn't know you if I fell over you, mate.

Adriana *[Played by Gough. Calling from offstage]* Yoo-hoo. *[Enters]* There you are. *[Comes down and addresses audience]* Suppose you thought it was an all-boys' show. No, no, no. My name's Adriana and I'm married to Antipolous. *[Looks at the rich twins. It doesn't matter]* One of them. Now to make the play really enjoyable, you have to believe the twins are absolutely identical. I do. I've just had lunch with one of them. *[Goes to point. Slower, uncertain]* It was No. Can't tell. *[Silly laugh]*

Dromio Epheus *[Announcing]* And now the tall tale of the two sets of twins.

Dromio S'cuse *[Announcing]* We present *The Comedy of Errors* by William Shakespeare.

[Perhaps subtle lighting change to further establish this is an excerpt. Actors come alive. The AUDIENCE on/near stage turn and face the players. Appropriate audience response heard during excerpt. Hubbub throughout with laughter at times and an "Oooo" etc at times. The underlined instructions are those suggested reactions by CF]

Adriana I see two husbands, or mine eyes deceive me.

Antip S'cuse I came from Syracuse.

Antip Epheus I came from Corinth. *[Suggest murmur/titter]*

Dromio Epheus And I with him.

Adriana Which of you two did dine with me today?

Antip S'cuse I, gentle mistress.

Adriana And are you not my husband? *[Suggest laughter here]*

Antip Epheus No, I say nay to that.

Antip S'cuse And so do I. Yet did she call me so;

What I told you then

I hope I shall have leisure to make good,

If this be not a dream I see and hear. *["Ooooo" from audience]*

Adriana *[To ANTIPHOLUS of EPHEUS]* I sent you money, sir, to be your bail, By Dromio, but I think he brought it not.

Dromio Epheus No, none by me. *[Suggest reaction here]*

Antip S'cuse *[To ADRIANA]* This purse of ducats I received from you, And Dromio my man did bring them me.

Dromio S'cuse *[To ANTIPHOLUS of EPHEUS]* Master, shall I fetch your stuff from shipboard?

Antip Epheus Dromio, what stuff of mine hast thou embarked?

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Dromio S'cuse Your goods that lay at host, sir.

Antip S'cuse He speaks to me. - I am your master, Dromio.

Come, go with us. We'll look to that anon.

Embrace your brother there; rejoice with him.

[Exit the brothers ANTIPHOLUS] [Suggest audience pleased]

Dromio S'cuse There is a fat friend at your master's house,

That kitchened me for you today at dinner.

She now shall be my sister, not my wife.

Dromio Epheus Methinks you are my glass and not my brother.

I see by you I am a sweet-faced youth.

Will you walk into see their gossiping?

Dromio S'cuse Not I, sir, you are my elder.

Dromio Epheus That's a question. How shall we try it?

Dromio S'cuse We'll draw cuts for your senior. Till then, lead thou first.

Dromio Epheus Nay, then thus:

We came into the world like brother and brother,

And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.

[Pause. Suddenly AUDIENCE applaud and all PLAYERS enter for one company bow. AUDIENCE clap, cheer and whistle. Lights dim, applause fades, concentrate DC as AUDIENCE exit in noisy good humour. PLAYERS gather DC congratulating one another after the play. They are on a high]

Heminges Will, you're a star. Another ripper script. *[OTHERS agree]*

Burbage And another great house. That little box in the office is full of lovely dosh. *[More happiness from OTHERS]*

Condell That little box in the office is the best part of being an actor. Here's to the box-office! *[Happiness. They toast. "The box-office"]*

Gough Well I reckon the best part of being an actor is growing too old to play *[Mock fury]* ... another bloody female!

[OTHERS laugh and tease GOUGH as they prepare to exit. WILLIAM remains behind with BURBAGE]

Heminges Come on you lot, the beer's on me. *[OTHERS exit. "Good idea" etc]*

Burbage Mind-blowing, mate. All that blood and guts in *Titus* and now crazy comedy in *Errors*. Great contrast. Brilliant. Now come on, get excited.

William I am excited but I've got a problem ... with a woman.

Burbage *[Dismayed]* Oh, no. Who is she and when's the baby due?

William Her name's Emilia Basso but I'm not sure if I'm the father. She's also seeing the Earl of Southampton.

Burbage Are you mad? He's your patron. He's paying you to write. And what about your wife and kids?

William My family must never hear about this.

Burbage *[Holds up hand]* Okay. But go home and have a cold bath. Copy? *[WILLIAM nods]* We need a new play for the Queen.

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- William** Yeah, I'm working on it.
- Burbage** Scripts, not sex. We're talking Queen of England. The big time. Forget the flings. Stick to scribbling.
[BURBAGE exits. Lights up on EMILIA sitting facing front brushing hair. Other lights dim. WILLIAM moves to EMILIA as SOUTHAMPTON enters from darkness. Each man is either side of EMILIA. Neither man acknowledges the other man until the song]
- Southampton** *[Kissing her hand]* My darling Emilia.
- Emilia** Why thank you, my lord.
- William** *[Kissing her other hand]* Emilia, my mistress, my passion.
- Emilia** *[Resumes brushing her hair]* I'm honoured. Wooed by the famous Will Shakespeare.
- Southampton** Emilia, you must stop seeing Shakespeare. He's an artist and you're interrupting his flow of words.
- Emilia** Perhaps he likes it. Perhaps he needs some life in the raw.
- William** Emilia, you must stop seeing the Earl. He's my patron and you're leading him astray.
- Emilia** Perhaps he likes it. Perhaps he needs some life in the raw.
- Southampton** *[Upset]* This is all a game to you. You lead us on, tell us we're magnificent lovers ...
- William** *[Upset]* You massage our egos, seduce our senses ...
- Southampton** Then someone else comes along, someone with more money ...
- William** More wit ...
- Southampton** More status ...
- William** You give us the flick and latch onto your latest toy boy.
- Emilia** Give you the flick! Toy boy! What sort of language is that from a poet?
- Southampton** Shakespeare *is* a poet, Emilia. He sent me some glorious sonnets.
- Shakespeare** "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate."
- Southampton** "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date."
- Emilia** "Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold-complexion dimmed ...
- Emilia & S'ton** So long as men can breath or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."
- William** *[Breaking in on their lovey-dovey scene]* Emilia, are you pregnant? And if so, who's the father?
- Emilia** Yes, Will, I am in the family way and the father's Lord Hunsdon.
- Southampton** *[Shocked]* The Lord Chamberlain!
- William** *[Shocked]* The Queen's cousin!
- Southampton** But he's old man.

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William He's got to be seventy.
Emilia Some say *sexty-five*. But don't get upset. His Lordship's given me big bucks and arranged for me to marry a court musician.
Southampton [*Aghast*] A musician! They're worse than writers!
Emilia [*Amused*] Very droll, my Lord. But fear not. All's well that end's well.
William Emilia, please. This is not a game.
Emilia Ah, but that's where you're wrong, Will. [*MUSIC BEGINS*] Life is one big game – and you as a writer know all about that. Forty love and balls to you.

No. 10 Love Is A Game

Emilia *Love is a game, play it. Love is a match, ole!
Love is a sport, a centre-court rort, a chance to cavort and play.
Love is a risk, take it, make it your bid for fame
Sharpen your wits, double or quits
Love is a game, a game.*

Southampton *If love is a game then there must be a winner
And therefore a loser in train.*

William *And winners are grinners with sashes and caches
And losers get nothing but pain.*

Southampton *If love is a game then there must be conditions
And rules so you cannot transgress.*

William *But cheating and beating's for users, abusers*
Men *And nothing succeeds like success.*
Trio *Love is a game, play it [etc]
[During the dance, a large, inflatable ball may appear for a game of Keeping's Off. Whatever the game, the men always lose. TRIO ends. Crossfade lights on TRIO who exit. Bring up light DR and WITCH 1 steps into the light. Prepare performing space for play excerpts]*

Witch 1 And so the church-going father of three, husband and dutiful son fell in love with acting, writing and Emilia. Mind you not all historians believe Emilia is the “dark lady” described in the sonnets and there are no long-lost love-letters from Will or Emilia.

Witch 2 In fact there are no letters from Will full stop [*period*]. For a writer, Shakespeare's lack of lines is remarkable. Surely he penned a few words to his folks, wife and children but if so, none has survived. Fortunately his plays and poems have and continue to be read and watched around the world.

Witch 3 The theatre dominated his life. He kept acting and writing and his fame kept growing. The public loved his plays, the aristocracy were impressed and the icing came when royalty gave them the big tick. Queen Elizabeth enjoyed actors performing at her palaces.

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Shakespeare's company was often invited to appear before Her Majesty ... *[Announces]* Queen Elizabeth the First!

[MUSIC BEGINS. During short interlude QUEEN with attendants enter and take up positions DL to watch the play. Perhaps highlight QUEEN as she enters. Once QUEEN is seated, lights dim DR. WITCHES fade away]

No. 11 Who Wants To Marry Me? Interlude 1

[QUEEN and ATTENDANTS are seated and lit in dim lighting BURBAGE – Burbage - enters and addresses audience, not the QUEEN]

Burbage All right? [How ya goin'?] *[Burps if possible]* My name's Jack Falstaff and as you can see I'm a big, fat, ugly bastard. Mr. William Bloody Shakespeare described me like a whole roasted ox stuffed with sausages. So I like a feed. Big deal. Anyhow I'm here in this London pub for a bit of a piss up. Dunno why I come in here 'cos the landlady's a real pain in the arse.

Quickly *[Gough enters wiping "her" hands]* Ah, there you are Sir Jack.

Burbage This is her. Mistress Quickly. Battle-axe par excellence.

Quickly Now here's a snapshot of real life. I'm a woman doin' all the work. He's a man hangin' out in a pub. Ring any bells?

Burbage I'd watch me manners, darlin'. I'm a mate of the next King of England.

Quickly That'd be right. Pullin' rank. *[Aside]* And y'self.

Burbage You wait till Prince Hal gets here. Just you wait.

[Actors freeze as WITCH 1 is lit]

Witch 1 Now Shakespeare included real people in his plays – even kings and queens - and the present monarch, *[Indicates]* Queen Elizabeth the First is in the audience tonight [today].

Witch 2 *[Is lit]* I wonder what Her Majesty will think and if Mistress Quickly will ever be paid by Sir Fat Falstaff.

Witch 3 *[Is lit]* We present the play *Henry IV* by William Shakespeare.

[Lights fade and WITCHES step back. LIGHTS concentrate C/DC as actors come alive and HOSTESS approaches FALSTAFF]

Sir John How now, Dame Partlet the hen, have you enquired yet who picked my pocket?

Hostess Why, Sir John, what do you think, Sir John? Do you think I keep thieves in my house? I have searched, I have enquired; so has my husband, man by man, boy by boy, servant by servant. The tithe of a hair was never lost in my house before.

Sir John Ye lie, Hostess: I'll be sworn my pocket was picked. Go to, you are a woman, go.

Hostess Who, I? No, I defy thee! God's light, I was never called so in mine own house before.

Sir John Go to, I know you well enough.

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- Hostess** No, Sir John, you do not know me, Sir John; I know you, Sir John. You owe me money, Sir John, and now you pick a quarrel to beguile me of it. I bought you a dozen shirts to your back.
- Sir John** Dowlas, filthy dowlas.
- Hostess** Now I am a true woman. You owe money here, Sir John: for your diet, and by-drinkings, and money lent you, four-and-twenty pound.
- Sir John** I'll not pay a denier. What, will you make a younker of me? Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket picked? I have lost a seal-ring of my grandfather's worth forty mark.
- Hostess** O Jesu, that ring was copper.
- Sir John** How? The Prince is a jack, a sneak-up. *[Raising his truncheon]* S'blood, and he were here I would cudgel him like a dog if he would say no.
[Enter PRINCE HARRY – Heminges - and HARVEY]
- Hostess** My lord. I pray you hear me.
- Prince Harry** What sayst thou, Mistress Quickly? How doth thy husband? I love him well; he is an honest man.
- Hostess** Good my lord, hear me!
- Sir John** Prithee, let her alone, and list to me.
- Prince Harry** What sayst thou, Jack?
- Sir John** The other night I fell asleep here and had my pocket picked. This house is turned bawdy-house: they pick pockets.
- Prince Harry** What didst thou lose, Jack?
- Sir John** Wilt thou believe me, Hal, three or four bonds of forty pound apiece, and a seal-ring of my grandfather's.
- Prince Harry** A trifle, some eightpenny matter.
- Hostess** So I told him, my lord; and, my lord, he said he would cudgel you.
- Prince Harry** What? He did not!
- Hostess** There's neither faith, truth, not womanhood in me else.
- Sir John** There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune, nor no more truth in thee than in a drawn fox; Go, you thing, go!
- Hostess** Say, what thing, what thing?
- Sir John** What thing? Why, a thing to thank God on.
- Hostess** I am no thing to thank God on. I would thou shouldst know it, I am an honest man's wife; and setting thy knighthood aside, thou art a knave to call me so.
- Prince Harry** Thou sayst true, Hostess, and he slanders thee most grossly.
- Hostess** So he doth you, my lord, and said this other day you owed him a thousand pound.
- Prince Harry** Sirrah, do I owe you a thousand pound?
- Sir John** A thousand pound, Hal? A million! Thy love is worth a million; thou owest me thy love.
- Hostess** Nay, my lord, he called you 'Jack' and said he would cudgel you.

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Sir John Yea, if he said my ring was copper.

Prince Harry I say 'tis copper; darest thou be as good as thy word now?

Sir John Hostess, I forgive thee. Go make ready breakfast. Love thy husband, look to thy servants, cherish thy guests. Nay, prithee, be gone. *[Exit HOSTESS]*
Now, Hal, to the news at court. For the robbery, lad, how is that answered?

Prince Harry O, my sweet beef, I must still be good angel to thee. The money is paid back again.

Sir John O. I do not like that paying back; 'tis a double labour.

Prince Harry Jack, meet me tomorrow in the Temple Hall at two o'clock in the afternoon. There shalt thou know thy charge, and there receive money and order for their furniture. The land is burning, Percy stands on high, and either we or they must lower lie.

Sir John Rare words! Brave world! *[Calling]* Hostess, my breakfast, come! - O, I could wish this tavern were my drum!
[SIR JOHN bows. QUICKLY and the PRINCE join bows. QUEEN and her entourage applaud. Actors mingle with members of the court. Lights change]

Queen Mr Burbage, congratulations.

Burbage *[Bowing]* Thank you, M'am. The playwright, Mr William Shakespeare.

William *[Bowing]* Your Majesty.

Queen Excellent work, Mr Shakespeare. I loved Sir Jack and wish to see more of him.

William *[Unsure]* Your Majesty?

Queen Falstaff's funny, a rogue, he loves life and he makes me laugh.

Burbage Well there is another play about King Henry the Fourth, your Majesty. Sir John Falstaff appears in that also.

Queen Yes but why not something *without* kings and princes and soldiers killing each other? Serious drama's fine but all work and no play makes Jack Falstaff a dull boy. *[Others politely amused]* Give him a West End farce, fellas! Put the pot-bellied in a pot-boiler.

Burbage Would your Majesty be pleased with a comedy starring Sir John?

Queen I'll be pleased and you'll be rich. But make it *English*, near London with people and places we all know. Lots of love and lechery. Oh and a happy ending of course.

William Of course, Ma'm.

Queen *[Ignores the facts]* Excellent. Well, you go and change cossies and I'll watch from over here. *[Indicates DR]*

William *[Uneasy]* But I haven't written the play yet, M'am.

Burbage *[Likewise uneasy]* And naturally we haven't started rehearsals, M'am.

Queen And remember, no-one ever went broke *underestimating* public taste. Gentlemen, start your engines! *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

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No. 12 Who Wants To Marry Me? Interlude 2

[The actors are stunned and disappear in a flap. QUEEN does lap of stage and takes up new position RC/DR surrounded by attendants. Her throne is/has been moved across stage. Lights dim and FALSTAFF – Burbage – enters and addresses audience. QUEEN in dim lighting]

- Falstaff** It's me again. Now in the last play I was a boozier, wouldn't pay me debts and sucked up to snobs. Sounds like a lot of politicians. *[Laughs]* This time, and no laughing mind, I'm a sex symbol. *[Could point finger in direction of anyone who does laugh]* Young Willy's got me all randy. And apparently I like the more mature lady.
- Mrs Ford** *[Gough enters fanning herself]* Ah, there you are Sir Jack.
- Burbage** This is her. Missus Ford. Sex-mad housewife par excellence.
- Mrs Ford** Now here's a snapshot of real life. I'm a married woman worried sick my husband'll catch me at it. He's a man getting his leg over without a worry in the world. Ring any bells?
- Falstaff** Mind you Mrs Ford here has got a mate, Mrs Page, and she fancies me an' all.
- Mrs Ford** Typical male. Thinks every woman in the world has the hots for him.
- Falstaff** *[To Mrs Ford]* Come on, darlin'. Let's try some horizontal dancin'?
- Mrs Ford** Don't laugh. That's his idea of foreplay.
- Falstaff** Enough of the chat. Let's do the business.
- Mrs Ford** *[Announcing]* We present *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by William Shakespeare.
- [Subtle lighting change as actors now become characters in excerpt]*
- Sir John** Mrs Ford, are you sure of your husband now?
- Mrs Ford** He's a-birding, sweet Sir John.
- Mrs Page** *[Calling from offstage]* What ho, gossip Ford, what ho!
- Mrs Ford** Step into the chamber, Sir John. *[SIR JOHN hides]*
- Mrs Page** *[Entering]* How now, sweetheart, who's at home beside yourself?
- Mrs Ford** Why, none but mine own people.
- Mrs Page** Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.
- Mrs Ford** Why?
- Mrs Page** Why, woman, your husband is in his old lines again. I am glad the fat knight is not here.
- Mrs Ford** I am undone; the knight is here.
- Mrs Page** Why then, you are utterly shamed, and he's but a dead man. Away with him! Better shame than murder.
- Mrs Ford** Which way should he go? Shall I put him into the basket again?
[SIR JOHN comes out of hiding]
- Sir John** No, I'll come no more i'th basket. May I not go out ere he come?
- Mrs Page** Alas, three of Mr Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols.

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Sir John What shall I do? I'll creep up into the chimney.
Mrs Ford He will seek there. There is no hiding you in the house.
Mrs Page If you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John, unless you go out disguised.
Mrs Ford How might we disguise him?
Mrs Page Alas I know not. There is no woman's gown big enough for him.
Mrs Ford My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brentford, has a gown above.
Mrs Page On my word, it will serve him; she's as big as he is. Run up Sir John.
Mrs Ford Go, go, sweet Sir John. Mrs Page and I will look some linen for your head.
Mrs Page Quick, quick! Put on the gown the while. *[SIR JOHN exits]*
Mrs Ford I would my husband would meet him in this shape. He cannot abide the old woman of Brentford. He swears she's a witch and hath threatened to beat her. *[MRS PAGE exits as MR FORD [Shakespeare] enters]*
Mr Ford Mrs Ford! Mrs Ford, the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband!
Mrs Ford God be my witness, if you suspect me in any dishonesty.
Mr Ford Well said, brazen-face.
Mrs Ford *[Calling]* What ho, Mrs Page! Come you and the old woman down.
Mr Ford Old woman? What old woman?
Mrs Ford Why, it is my maid's Aunt of Brentford.
Mr Ford A witch, a quean, an old, cozening quean! Have I not forbid her my house? Come down, you witch, you hag, you! Come down, I say!
[MRS PAGE enters with SIR JOHN disguised as old woman. MR FORD moves to SIR JOHN]
Mrs Ford Nay, good sweet husband.
Mrs Page *[To SIR JOHN]* Come, Mother Prat. Give me your hand.
Mr Ford I'll prat her. *[He beats SIR JOHN. QUEEN and audience laugh]* Out of my door, you witch, you rag, you baggage, you polecat, you runnion! Out, out! I'll conjure you, I'll fortune-tell you! *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

No. 13 Who Wants To Marry Me Interlude 3

[SIR JOHN is chased off/around performing space by MR FORD. QUEEN and party laugh/applaud. The actors quickly form a line DC and bow to the actual audience. SIR JOHN is DC, the star. QUEEN and party exit. Actors bow to departing monarch. Lights only on actors DC. Actors bow again then break up to congratulate one another. They are happy. It's their after-show party. All the above happens during the musical interlude]

Burbage *[Addressing company]* Gentlemen, gentlemen, please. *[OTHERS settle but still buzz]* Her Majesty is delighted, our fee is fantastic and Will Shakespeare has done it again!
[Cheers, applause and WILLIAM is congratulated]

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Condell Listen, Will. Most actors are happy to act. You write them as well.
Heminges And they're all bloody hits! Come on, Shakespeare, what *can't* you do?
William Well I can't do anything without the best bunch of actors in England.
[More clapping/back-slapping. RICHARD FIELD enters. BURBAGE happy]
Burbage Richard Field. The very man who introduced us to Shakespeare.
[FIELD is welcomed by the actors]
William Richard, lovely to see you. We've just had a triumph in front of the Queen.
Field *[Reserved]* I know. You're the talk of the town.
William Two grammar school boys from the sticks, hey? Thanks mate.
Field *[Finds this difficult]* William, I'm sorry, but I've got bad news.
[Suddenly atmosphere is tense]
William *[Changes mood. Serious]* What's wrong? What's happened?
Field It's your son, Hamnet. ... Oh Will, your boy is dead.
[MUSIC BEGINS. Lights change to sombre mood. WILLIAM'S wife, parents and daughters - ages 11 and 13 - enter wearing black. Smallish coffin is placed C. Actors move to sides and WILLIAM moves to his family. COMPANY enter upstage in darkness]

No. 14 Grief

Company *Grief fills the room up of my absent child.
Grief.*
William *[Speaks during the song]* Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form:
Then have I reason to be fond of grief.
[During the song, various characters approach and surround WILLIAM. After his speech, each begs him for assistance or urges he take definite action. WILLIAM is eventually surrounded by his friends and family and faces a crisis. COMPANY continues to sing]
Anne Will, we miss you. Our girls are growing.
John I'm in trouble, son. My debts are killing me.
Mary Come home darling boy. Come back to Stratford.
Southampton Shakespeare, we live in treacherous times. Beware of politics!
Emilia William, my love, your sonnets are dazzling.
Burbage We need more plays, Will. Please. Stay here in London.
[Music swells and curtain falls. End of Act One]

Act Two

No. 15 Entr'acte

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[Curtain rises towards end of Entr'acte. It's bleak, dark, eerie, swirling mist. Thunder claps/lightning flashes upstage. Only front smallish part of stage is lit with directly overhead lighting. Into dimly lit area step three mysterious characters, dressed in black with long, messy hair and hideous faces although tis hard to see their faces in the spooky dim light. They speak with a touch of evil and certainly in character]

- Witch 1** When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
- Witch 2** When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle's lost and won.
- Witch 3** That will be ere the set of sun.
- Witch 1** Where the place?
- Witch 2** Upon the heath.
- Witch 3** There to meet with Macbeth.
- Witch 1** I come, Grimalkin.
- Witch 2** Paddock calls.
- Witch 3** Anon.
- Trio** Fair is foul, and foul is fair, Hover through the fog and filthy air.
[WITCHES laugh, return to Narrator characters. WITCH 1 to newly lit area]
- Witch 1** Once a witch always a witch. But let's recap. Shakespeare was born in England on April 23, 1564, St. George's Day. A fine romantic notion.
- Witch 2** Shakespeare's parents were middle-class, he went to the Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar School, married aged 18 and fathered three children before he was 21.
- Witch 3** England was a violent, fearful country with widespread bubonic plague, spies, torture and executions. Just being a Catholic could mean horrendous punishment or death.
- Witch 1** Shakespeare left Stratford for London. He became an actor in a company which made a lot of money. He became a successful actor and playwright.
- Witch 2** His plays were hugely popular The Queen of England was often entertained by Shakespeare's company performing one of his plays.
- Witch 3** But tragedy struck. His only son, Hamnet, died aged 11. Shakespeare's father, John, a one-time mayor of Stratford, fell badly into debt and was sacked.
- Witch 1** Queen Elizabeth was childless and many powerful people worried about her successor. Her father had created the Church of England making England a Protestant country with the monarch the head of both church and state.
- Witch 2** If the Queen died childless, the new monarch might be a Catholic. Spies were everywhere. Shakespeare's England was a very scary place.

BREAK IN PAGES

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And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

No. 19 To Thine Own Self Be True

Females [Sung under speech] *Give everyone thine ear, but few thy voice
Cling to your friends so dear, respect their choice.
Look to your character and so rejoice
To thine own self be true.*

Males [Sung under speech] *Be thou familiar, shun vulgarity
Neither a borrower or lender be
Take every censure but reserve decree
To thine own self be true.*

Company *To thine own self be true. True.
[BLACKOUT. Company prepare for Curtain Calls. WILLIAM exits]*

No. 20 Curtain Calls

Company *Every person's a player, every life is a play
Every street is a scenic treat with a showtime beat every day
Every life is a story of love, hope, grief and rage
Every person's a player, all the world is a ...
Treading the boards, just treading the boards
We practise histrionic art
We entertain hordes from lackeys to lords
Our jester will gesture and play every part.
The pay is pathetic, we're on if we get sick
And hope and pray some patron applauds
It's comic and tragic, the theatre is magic
When tread, tread, treading the boards.
You can smart, break your heart,
It'll start when you're part of the audience
Buy a bun, fill with fun, and it's done
When you're one with the audience
You can let emotion soar and come back again for more
You can shout, you can tout when you're out and about
With the audience.
To thine own self be true.*

No. 21 Payout

The End

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