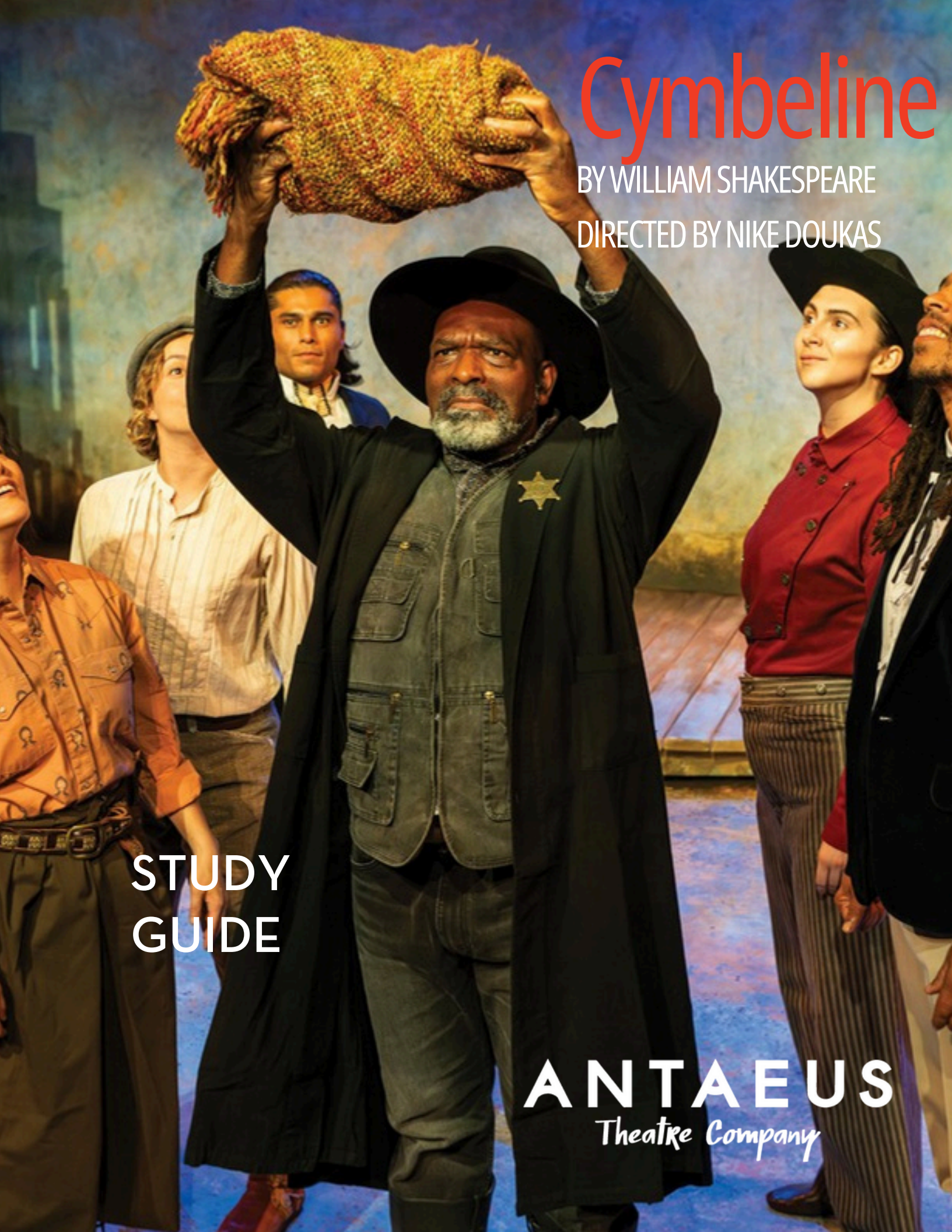


Cymbeline

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTED BY NIKE DOUKAS

STUDY GUIDE

ANTAEUS

Theatre Company

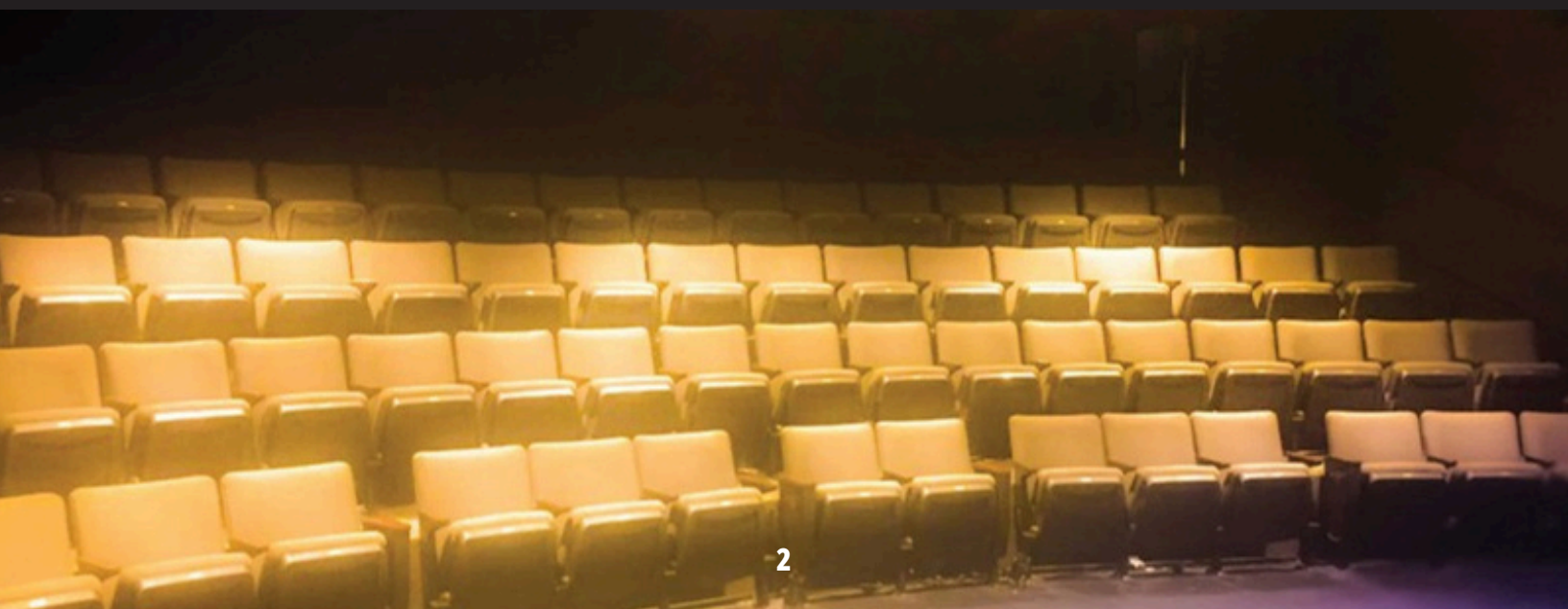
WELCOME TO **ANTAEUS**

We are excited to share this production of Cymbeline, by William Shakespeare with you. As you step into our home, we want to share a little bit about our history and values as a theater company.

Antaeus began in 1991 as a project of the prestigious Center Theatre Group. Founding Artistic Directors Dakin Matthews and Lillian Groag believed there could be a world-class classical ensemble in a city driven by the TV and film industry. They brought together a remarkable group of 30 members to embark on this ambitious project. The group came together every Monday night to read, study and rehearse great, classical plays. Over the next three decades, Antaeus grew into a professional, non-profit theater featuring an acting company comprised of some of the greatest talents Los Angeles has to offer.

In March 2017, we were thrilled to open the doors to our new, permanent home in Downtown Glendale, the Kiki & David Gindler Performing Arts Center. As Antaeus continues to grow and mature, we remain committed to producing full seasons of plays, providing professional training and arts education programs, and utilizing our home as much as possible.

We believe in the transformative power of live theater.



CHARACTERS

CYMBELINE—THE KING OF BRITAIN

IMOGEN—DAUGHTER OF CYMBELINE BY HIS FORMER QUEEN

THE QUEEN—SECOND WIFE TO CYMBELINE,
IMOGEN'S STEP-MOTHER

POSTHUMUS LEONATUS—HUSBAND TO IMOGEN

CLOTEN—SON OF THE PRESENT QUEEN BY A FORMER HUSBAND

PISANIA—POSTHUMUS'S SERVANT

CORNELIUS—A PHYSICIAN IN CYMBELINE'S COURT

PHILARIO—POSTHUMUS'S HOST IN ROME

FRENCHIE—FRIEND TO PHILARIO

IACHIMO—FRIEND TO PHILARIO

CAIUS LUCIUS—A ROMAN GENERAL

BELARIA—AN EXILED NOBLEWOMAN

GUIDERIUS—FIRST LOST SON OF CYMBELINE,
IMOGEN'S BROTHER TWO LORDS

ARVIRAGUS—SECOND LOST SON OF CYMBELINE,
IMOGEN'S BROTHER TWO LORDS

SYNOPSIS: CYMBELINE

ACT I

King Cymbeline of Britain is angry with his daughter, Imogen, for secretly marrying Posthumus Leonatus, a low-born man who was raised in his court. As punishment, Posthumus is banished to Italy. Before leaving, he and Imogen exchange tokens of love: she gives him a ring, and he gives her a bracelet. In Rome, Posthumus meets the cunning Iachimo, who wagers that he can seduce Imogen. If he succeeds, he wins Posthumus's ring. Posthumus, confident in Imogen's fidelity, accepts the bet. Meanwhile, Cymbeline's second wife, the Queen, plots to annul the marriage between Imogen and Posthumus and to wed Imogen to her foolish son, Cloten. Imogen enlists the help of her husband's servant, Pisania, to keep Cloten at bay.

ACT II

Iachimo travels to Britain and tries to seduce Imogen, but she rejects him. Undeterred, he sneaks into her bedroom and observes intimate details (like a mole on her body), and steals her bracelet while she sleeps. Back in Rome, Iachimo "proves" Imogen's unfaithfulness to Posthumus using the bracelet and information he has gained.

ACT III

War looms between Britain and Rome as Cymbeline decides to no longer pay Roman tribute. The heartbroken Posthumus orders his servant Pisania to kill Imogen in the wilderness. Pisania, unwilling to harm Imogen, ignores her master's orders and tells Imogen to flee to safety. Imogen, disguised as "Fidele," finds a cave inhabited by two young men, Guiderius and Arviragus, and

SYNOPSIS: CYMBELINE (CONT'D)

their "mother," an old woman named Belaria. Unbeknownst to them, Belaria is a banished lady who kidnapped Cymbeline's two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, when they were infants. They all bond, unaware of each other's true identities. Meanwhile, back at court, the Queen plots to poison both Imogen and Cymbeline to place Cloten on the throne. The Queen's poison, however, ends up in Imogen's possession. Cloten, enraged by Imogen's rejection, dons Posthumus's clothes and follows her to Wales, intending to rape her and to kill Posthumus.

ACT IV

Cloten arrives in Wales and is confronted by Guiderius, who kills him in a fight and leaves the body where it fell in the woods. Later, Guiderius casts Cloten's head into the stream. Imogen, who is now sick, takes a potion given to her by the Queen, believing it to be medicine. The potion, however, is a poison that only mimics death. She falls into a deep sleep, and the brothers, believing her dead, lay her next to the headless body of Cloten. When Imogen awakens, she sees Cloten's body in her husband's clothes and believes it is Posthumus who has been killed. Back in Britain, Cymbeline faces a Roman army on his doorstep while the Queen has fallen deathly ill from worry over her missing son.

ACT V

The Roman army invades Britain. Posthumus, disguised as a British soldier, fights bravely against the Romans, saving Cymbeline's life. Belaria and the two princes, Guiderius and Arviragus, also fight for Britain. In the final scene, all the characters are brought together. The Queen's evil deeds are revealed, Iachimo confesses his treachery, and Belaria reveals the princes' true identities. Imogen is reunited with her husband, and Cymbeline is reunited with his sons. All conflicts are resolved, and Cymbeline agrees to pay the tribute to Rome.

THE LIFE OF "THE BARD"

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, 91 miles northwest of London. He was the third child of John Shakespeare, a glove-maker and leather merchant, and Mary Arden. He was likely educated in grammar school in Stratford, where he learned Latin, a bit of Greek, and read the Roman dramatists; he did not, however, attend university. At eighteen years old, he married Anne Hathaway. They raised two daughters, Susanna and Judith (born 1583 and 1585), and lost their son, Hamnet, at age 11. By 1592, Shakespeare had moved to London and was earning some income as an actor and poet. His first published works were two long-form narrative poems, "Venus and Adonis" (1593) and

"The Rape of Lucrece" (1594). In 1594, Shakespeare joined the acting troupe The Lord Chamberlain's Men, where he worked as an actor and writer and was also a financial shareholder. The company was very popular in the London theater scene and quickly attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth I, who became their most famous admirer. Also in 1594 appeared Shakespeare's first published *plays, Titus Andronicus and Henry VI,* Part 2 (as it is now called).
In 1596, Shakespeare wrote his second tragedy, Romeo and Juliet, and over the next dozen years continued to further explore the genre and wrote some of the plays he is now most famous for:

Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra.
He also wrote many successful comedies, *including A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, and Much Ado About* Nothing. In 1599, Shakespeare's company built the Globe Theatre, which became their new playhouse.
Late in Shakespeare's life, he experimented with genre and wrote romances, including Cymbeline,

The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest.
He retired from the stage sometime after 1612 and died in 1616.

WHAT MAKES SHAKESPEARE SPECIAL?

The answer to the above question is a difficult one, and every avid reader of the Bard may have a slightly different answer.

Literary critic Harold Bloom famously argued that Shakespeare "invented the human," by first portraying characters who "overheard" themselves and developed through introspection and self-interrogation rather than external factors. Some may argue this is giving Shakespeare a bit too much credit. Regardless, one thing is true: a lot of people love these plays.

"He has a way of saying things that has never been bettered. He's got a way of getting to the nub of what it means to be a human being. And he says it better than anyone has done since."
—David Tennant

"Shakespeare's the 'What's Going On,' the White Album, the 'Tapestry' for me. The ultimate challenge and the ultimate standard."
—Denzel Washington

"Shakespeare has this magical effect that he does teach you, you know? You have to get bigger than you are in the first place to play Shakespeare. You have to grow to reach these characters, to reach the language, to reach the imagery. And because you hear yourself saying certain beautiful, powerful, extraordinary things, you hear your voice saying it, and you know your mind has thought it, it actually expands your sense of yourself."
—Harriet Walter

"I think that it is as likely that Shakespeare will stop interesting people as that flowers will stop interesting people."
—Sir Ian McKellen

CYMBELINE BACKGROUND

William Shakespeare's Cymbeline was likely written around 1609–1610, during the later period of his career often referred to as his "romance" phase. This phase includes other plays like The *Winter's Tale, Pericles, and The Tempest,* all of which blend elements of tragedy, comedy, and fairy-tale-like resolution. Although titled after a historical British king—Cunobeline, who ruled during the Roman occupation of Britain—the play is not strictly a history. Shakespeare drew only loosely from historical sources, particularly Holinshed's Chronicles, which provided the names and broad setting but little of the narrative. The main plot, involving the innocent heroine Imogen wrongly accused of infidelity, is adapted from a tale in Giovanni Boccaccio's Decameron. Shakespeare combined this with other folkloric and classical elements, such as lost princes, wicked stepmothers, disguises, and divine revelations. Written during the reign of King James I, Cymbeline also reflects contemporary political interests in British identity, national unity, and the nature of kingship—very relevant topics at the time because James was promoting the unification of England and Scotland. The Roman-British setting and themes of tribute and resistance may also echo England's imperial ambitions and historical self-image.

Cymbeline showcases Shakespeare's mature poetic style, creative narrative structure, and evolving interest in redemption, grace, and human resilience. It was first published in the 1623 First Folio of his works, where it was categorized as a tragedy, though modern critics often see it as a romance or tragicomedy. Today, it is valued for its imaginative richness and the strength of its heroine, Imogen, one of Shakespeare's most admired female characters.

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Shakespeare lived in two different centuries and during the reign of two English monarchs: Elizabeth I and James I. This era as a whole is known as the English Renaissance, a cultural and artistic flourishing in England following the Late Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance, which preceded the English Renaissance by about a century. Rather than the architecture, sculpture, and painting that made the Italian Renaissance famous, the English Renaissance was known mostly for its contributions to music and literature. It was also known for its conflicts between Protestants and Catholics as the monarchy changed its religious policies and allegiance. This led to spying, assassination attempts, persecutions, and foreign wars over religion.

London flourished in the Elizabethan era as the population exploded. It was the centre of government, of overseas trade and finance, and of fashion, taste, and culture. It was ruled by a merchant oligarchy, whose wealth increased tremendously over the course of the century as international trade expanded. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, it housed a quarter of a million people, many of whom were poor migrants from the countryside looking for work. The streets were loud, smelly, and dirty, but also very lively.

If you lived in Shakespeare's London, you might…

- **Drinkabeer for breakfast!(Fornutrition,ofcourse.)**
- **Apprentice for a local blacksmith, cloth-weaver, or carpenter**
- **Bake your bread in a bakery's communal oven down the street**
- **Watch the merchant ships sail along the Thames**
- **Stroll down London Bridge and see the heads of traitors on spikes — or go see an execution in person!**
- **Listen to a street musician or attend a fair**
- **Do some gambling, fencing, or watch a bear-baiting!**
- **Avoid the plague like the plague!**

THEATER IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Theater in Shakespeare's London was not considered a high art, but rather popular entertainment. Poetry was considered the peak of literature, but theater was how writers like Shakespeare made their money. Plays were incredibly popular among the lower and upper classes alike. The only people who didn't like them were the Puritans — extreme Protestants who preached solemnity and disliked excess. To them, popular entertainment such as theater, music, and dance was contrary to a life of worship and they sought to shut it down whenever they could, with mixed success.

Plays were performed in playhouses, inns, courtyards, outdoor stages, and royal courts and palaces. Stages were relatively bare, with the exception of some emblematic set pieces that might represent the setting such as a tree for a forest. All of the roles were played by men, with young boys usually playing the women and girls' characters. There were famous actors of the time that were favorites with audiences who played many of the leading roles. Actor Richard Burbage played many of Shakespeare's lead roles, including Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Richard III, Romeo, King Lear, and Othello.

Plays were often produced by acting companies that maintained a regular repertoire of plays with consistent actors and writers that often leased, but sometimes owned their own performance space, like Shakespeare's company and their Globe Theatre. They were often reliant on wealthy aristocrats or merchants to sponsor them and if they were really lucky, could receive favor or sponsorship from the Crown.

Because printing was expensive, no actor ever had the entire script to a play.

Instead, their lines and their cue lines were written down on slips of paper called roles (sound familiar?). Shakespeare's plays were mostly performed outdoors, in daylight, and to large, rowdy crowds. Only the wealthy could afford seats and instead, most spectators stood.

DIRECTING SHAKESPEARE

A Conversation with Director Nike Doukas

Q: As both the director of this production and the Artistic Director of Antaeus, why did you include Cymbeline in this season?

A: When we choose plays for the company, we always ask: do we have the actors for these characters? Does it challenge us? Does it fit who we are? We don't want to pick a play that's wonderful on its own, but doesn't resonate with our ensemble and audiences. I also think Cymbeline is unfairly neglected. Most people I talk to have never seen it, yet it's a masterful, late play. It's not as sweeping as The Tempest, or as overtly supernatural as some of the other romances, but it's incredibly skillful. Shakespeare spins between genres with ease, and somehow the whole thing holds together. The first time you read it, you think, What on earth is happening? But once you get into it, you realize how beautifully it's structured. He even winks at the audience with echoes of his earlier works, but the play stands on its own. At its heart, it's about a king who has lost his way—someone not listening to the right people, which causes chaos in his community. Then others, often working behind the scenes, have to set things right. And, of course, it's got everything: jealousy, romance, mistaken identity, and Imogen, who many consider one of Shakespeare's greatest heroines. There's comedy, pathos, and those moments where Shakespeare releases tension with laughter—turning tragedy into something suddenly human and funny. That's one of the things I love most about theater.

Q: How is directing Shakespeare different from directing other plays?

A: In many ways it's the same, but the big difference is the language. Even with very seasoned actors, you have to push: Make me understand this line. If the operative word isn't lifted, no one in the audience will follow. It takes much more effort than a contemporary play to ensure clarity. Then there's the sheer size. Shakespeare always seems to have three thousand scenes—no matter how much you cut. Rehearsals need careful pacing, and once the play is on its feet, it requires orchestration: managing shifts in tempo, balancing dynamics, making sure the energy rises and falls in the right places. It's more multifaceted than most modern plays. And then there's the cutting. Cutting is one of my favorite parts of directing Shakespeare. But the important thing is that I never cut to make the play into my story. I try to honor Shakespeare's vision. I often imagine him saying, "Oh, yes, get rid of that—you don't need it anymore."

Q:This production is set in the Old West. What drew you to that setting?

A:When I thought about Cymbeline as history—he was a real king in England—Irealized no one today knows who he was. So what's the point of grounding it in literal history? Instead, I asked: what's our American epic? I landed on setting it in theOld West. The story is sweeping, full of archetypes that translate perfectly: Cymbeline becomes a sheriff; his wife, a conniving former saloonkeeper; her son, a brawling troublemaker. There's a brave heroine, an orphaned outsider hero, mountain folk, a loyal servant, and a town doctor. It all fits. The war in the play is the trickiest element, but Shakespeare barely stages it. It's mostly described. So in our version, it's more like a Hatfields-and-McCoys feud between rival factions. The West also carries themes of expansiveness, beauty, loneliness, and rugged independence—all qualities that match Cymbeline. Each character acts alone, unaware that others are also working to save the community. That individualism feels very American.

Q: As a director, you wear many hats. Which part of the process feels most natural to you, and which part is more challenging?

A: I feel most at home with the actors, because that's where I began—as an actor myself. That background helps me see the core of a scene: what the crisis is, why we're here, how the arc works. I also love making things theatrical. I like embracing the fact that we're in a theater, as opposed to what we see in film. But I'll admit the visual design intimidates me at first as a director. Before the set design comes together, I worry about how I'll stage the play. Once I have that framework, I enjoy it but it's not where my confidence lies. With actors, though, I feel completely at home. That's always been my way in as a director.

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

Have you ever heard or read a Shakespeare play and thought it sounded like a foreign language? While there are certainly a lot of words and grammatical conventions used in Shakespeare that aren't so popular today, Shakespeare's English is actually much closer linguistically to our English than you might think.

The English spoken in Shakespeare's day is called Early Modern English. It's also sometimes called Elizabethan English or, appropriately, Shakespearean English! That's right: Shakespeare's plays are so influential we named an entire period of our language after him! This period ran from about 1500 to 1750 CE. Before this came Old English (450-1200 CE) and Middle English (1200-1500 CE) and then afterward is the form that we speak today: Modern English.

Let's check out some sample sentences from each of these periods to see how foreign they sound to us!

Beowulf, author unknown. Written between 700 and 1000 CE

Old English: "Selre bið æghwæm þæt he his freond wrece þonne he fela murne."

Modern English: "It is always better to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning."

The Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer. Written 1387-1400 CE

Middle English: "He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde In al his lyf unto no maner wight."

Modern English: "He never said any rude word in all his life to any sort of person."

Cymbeline, William Shakespeare. Written 1609-1610

Early Modern English: "There is no danger in what show of death it makes, more than the locking-up the spirits a time."

Modern English: "It isn't really dangerous, but only makes you appear to be dead for a period of time."

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: VERSE

Shakespeare's plays are written in two forms: verse and prose. Verse consists of structured lines that follow a meter, or a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Verse is the language of formal poetry, and so in Shakespeare's dialogue we see him combine an ear for human speech and characterization and the poetic talent he reveals in his sonnets.

Prose is unstructured, "everyday" speech. Characters may speak in verse to show emotion, formality, or respect, while characters may speak in prose to show rationality or a casual tone. Shakespeare makes very deliberate choices in when to use prose and verse.

The most popular form of verse in Shakespeare's day is called iambic pentameter. A metrical foot is a unit of two syllables, while an iamb is a metrical foot featuring an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: duh-dum. The prefix penta- means "five." So iambic pentameter is a line of verse in which there are five iambs (and ten syllables total). So the rhythm of the line is: duh-dum duh-dum duh-dum duh-dum duh-dum.

Check out these lines of Posthumus' dialogue:

"My queen, my mistress! O, lady, weep no more,
Lest I give cause to be suspected of
More tenderness than doth become a man."

Now look at the meter (emphasis shown in italics):

"My queen, my mistress! O, la-dy weep no more,
Lest I give cause to be sus-pec-ted of
More ten-der-ness than doth be-come a man."

Notice how the first line shows an irregular meter; there's an extra syllable. But after "O, lady," the meter becomes extremely precise iambic pentameter. Shakespeare uses the rhythm as a clue to suggest that Posthumus is trying to get his emotions under control to appear strong for Imogen.

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: IMAGERY

Part of what makes Shakespeare's writing so alluring is his evocative use of imagery. Because in Elizabethan theater the visual spectacle of a production was limited, the spectacle came from the words of the playwright and imagination of the audience.
A particularly stirring use of imagery in Cymbeline comes when Arviragus and Guiderius sing a song of mourning for Imogen, who they believe is dead.

> Fear no more the heat o' th'sun, Nor the furious winter's rages; Thou thy worldly task hast done, Home art gone and ta'en thy wages. Golden lads and girls all must, As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

The first two lines rely on parallelism, or a repeating or contrasting image or phrase. Shakespeare uses opposite images from nature—the sun's heat (or summertime) and the stormy weather of winter. He also uses personification when describing "winter's rages." This specific device is called a pathetic fallacy, which assigns human emotions to inanimate objects or phenomena (especially weather). Notice how much more striking and powerful this choice is than simply describing a storm.
Shakespeare then makes several allusions to labor. He compares death to coming home from a day's work and taking their pay with them. This would have resonated with Shakespeare's largely Christian audience, who viewed acceptance into Heaven as a reward for a hard life of work and worship.
In the last line Shakespeare further references Judeo-Christian imagery with the line, "come to dust." This hearkens back to the biblical passage from Genesis 3:19 where God tells Adam, the first man,

> By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you will return.

DIRECT ADDRESS

In Shakespeare's plays, he employs a special kind of speech called a soliloquy. In contrast to dialogue, where two or more characters are speaking to each other, or a monologue, in which one character is speaking to others in a long passage of speech, a soliloquy is when a character is delivering a speech presumably alone.

Sometimes a soliloquy can be a longer version of an aside, in which a character makes brief remarks to themselves with no one else able to hear them. The matter of who a character is addressing in a soliloquy or aside is an important interpretive decision for the director and actors to make.

Sometimes a character is truly babbling to themselves. But there are often instances in which a character is making a direct address, in which they break the imaginary "fourth wall" that separates the audience from the action and speaks to the audience itself.

In a play like Cymbeline, which is full of disguise and deception, direct address techniques like asides and soliloquies can serve to reveal the character's inner motives. This helps the audience understand truth from falsehood. For example, Cornelius (the physician) says of the Queen:

> I do not like her. She doth think she has Strange lingering poisons:
> I do know her spirit, And will not trust one of her malice
> with A drug of such damn'd nature.

This aside clarifies the plot point that the poison the doctor gives her isn't fatal, which is why later Imogen appears to die in the wilderness and then is revived. The aside is a simple, direct way to understand why and how this happens rather than having it explained by other characters. Asides are used throughout Cymbeline to show how dishonest characters might actually feel about each other, and also to reveal how they plot to undermine and trick one another, whether for good or for evil.

What is another example of a memorable aside or soliloquy in the play?

What do you learn from it about the characters, plot, or themes?

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: VOCABULARY

Shakespeare uses over 20,000 different words in his plays and poems. That's a lot of words! But did you know that he is said to have coined as many as 1,700 of them? Shakespeare was a wordsmith. He took existing words and made compound words with them, or added new prefixes and suffixes to create totally new meanings. Sometimes he changed the part of speech of an existing word, like using a noun as a verb for the first time (such as "to elbow"). Some words just seem totally made up, like Dr. Seuss— except we still widely use some of those words today. Some of these may have existed orally prior to Shakespeare, but he is the first known person to write them down. Here are some of Shakespeare's famous attributed words:

accommodation
aerialamazement
assassination
auspicious
baseless
bloody
bump
castigate
countless
courtship
critic
dawn
dexterously
dire
dishearten
dislocate
downstairs
dwindle
eventful
exposure
eyeballs
fashionable
fitful
frugal
generous
gloomy
gnarled
impartial
indistinguishable
invulnerable
lackluster
lapse
laughable
lonely
majestic
misplaced
monumental
obscene
pious
premeditated
radiance
reliance
sanctimonious
sportive
submerge
suspicious
swag ger

SHAKESPEARE'S GENRES

In drama, just like in novels, movies, TV shows, video games, and other forms of narrative storytelling, we see recurring patterns in plot, tone, and characterization. These distinct patterns are called genres. In Shakespeare's day, storytelling literacy wasn't as widespread as it is today, which made genre even more important. It helped cue an audience as to what they could generally expect from the story in terms of plot developments, themes, and tone.

In Shakespeare's canon of plays, there are three main genres that we often discuss: comedy, tragedy, and history. In a comedy, it is generally assumed that no matter what complications arise, the characters will turn out more or less all right. They often end in weddings and celebrations, with all misunderstandings resolved and transgressions forgiven. In a tragedy, the main characters suffer immensely and often die. Often they suffer a horrible fate due either to poor judgment, a flaw in their character, or unfortunate circumstances. The histories are plays Shakespeare wrote about English or European history. They can have elements of comedy or tragedy but are not as formulaic because they resemble historical events, which do not conform neatly to genre.

But there are Shakespearean plays that don't fit neatly into these three categories. Scholars often refer to these plays as problem plays or romances. Problem plays are plays from throughout Shakespeare's career that focus on complex social issues and mix elements of tragedy and comedy, such as The Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure, and All's Well That Ends Well. Romances are plays from late in Shakespeare's career that also mix tragedy and comedy and often feature mystical, magical, and grandiose scenes *and themes, such as The Tempest, Cymbeline, and Pericles, Prince of Tyre.*

What elements of comedy, tragedy, and history do you see blended *in Cymbeline*?

Which stands out the strongest to you?

COSTUME DESIGN IN CYMBELINE

Perhaps more than any other design element, costumes directly communicate to the audience what period a play is set in.

For example, when we see bell bottom jeans, we immediately think of the 1960s and 1970s. Fashion trends can become universal, cyclical, or confined to one era.

Costumes also convey a culture's attitudes toward gender. How do men dress? How do women dress? What does this reveal about their social roles and expectations? In this culture, is gender binary or a spectrum?

Finally, costumes reveal character. Does a character's costume reveal their occupation, wealth, or status? How formally does a character dress compared to others? Are they well-manicured or slovenly? Is that related to something happening in the plot? Do they always dress that way?

COSTUME DESIGN IN CYMBELINE (CONT'D)

Costume designer Julie Keen says:

"In this play, many characters read as archetypes — the evil queen, the ingénue, the hero, the villain. From a design perspective, those categories are clear. But our director, Nike, doesn't always want them to appear so obvious. She's creative in reframing those roles, so I often ask: how much do you want the audience to know right away? How much do you want to tip your hand? In Westerns, costuming quickly signals character type—the villain in black, the hero in white. Early film and TV Westerns had to telegraph that clearly for audiences. But the fun of design is that you don't have to do that. You can interpret characters in multiple ways—a 'good guy' haunted by his past, a 'bad guy' with a hopeful streak. The question is: how much do you reveal, and how much do you hold back?"

One of Julie's favorite parts of the process is working with actors:

"I always begin with a conversation before showing clothes. If an actor feels uncomfortable in a costume, it doesn't matter how clever it looks—it's a failure. Acting is an incredibly brave thing to do and costumes need to support their process."

ACTING SHAKESPEARE

A Conversation with Actor JD Cullum, who Plays Lucius, Cornelius, Philario and the First Lord

Q: As an actor how do you navigate the complex tone of this genre?

A: I approach it with the same tools I use for any Shakespeare play. The goal is always to make the language clear and intelligible for the audience, while creating characters that both serve the play and feel satisfying to perform. Cymbeline is particularly challenging, but our director, Nike, has done a terrific job with the editing. She's streamlined the text and clarified passages that might otherwise confuse a contemporary audience. That work makes the play much more accessible in performance than it seems on the page. Still, it requires concentration and study to really grasp—it's one of Shakespeare's longest plays and, in its uncut form, can be difficult to digest. This production, though, is lean and swift, which makes a huge difference.

Q: You mentioned clarity of language. What other advantages does Shakespearean training give an actor that they might not get elsewhere?

A: Above all, it forces you to truly understand what you're saying. Inexperienced actors sometimes dive into a scene with lots of emotion before they've worked out the meaning of the text. With Shakespeare, you simply can't get away with that—

you need to puzzle through every word. Once you understand it, the task is to communicate it clearly: finding the operative words, shaping the thought, and leaning into the rhythm of the iambic pentameter. Shakespeare wrote in a way that, when spoken with attention to rhythm, becomes naturally intelligible to the ear. His plays are language driven. They don't rely as much on behavior or spectacle as they do on the actor's voice and ability to convey meaning. That kind of training sharpens an actor's precision and clarity in any role, Shakespearean or not.

Q: In this production, you're something of a utility player, appearing in multiple roles. How does that differ from focusing on just one character?

A: It's a challenge, but also a lot of fun. Nike gave me the freedom to experiment with different accents, since we're imagining the Old West as a place where people arrived from all over. Right now, I'm working on a Scottish accent—which is proving trickier than I expected. I'm also trying a German accent for Cornelius, the doctor, which feels promising. For other characters, I'll use accents I know well, like Southern American, with variations depending on the character's background. And one role will have a more neutral, Western cadence—something in the spirit of John Wayne, with drawn-out vowels and a slower pace shaped by the wide-open geography. I love how climate and landscape influence speech. In colder regions, people tend to keep their mouths tighter, creating more compressed sounds; in warmer places, the speech opens up. It's fascinating how those details can also shape a character.

Q: When developing multiple characters, what's your point of entry?

A: I usually start by imagining their circumstances. Cornelius, for example, is an educated doctor, surrounded by books and chemicals. I picture him as nearsighted, maybe wearing glasses, a little pompous, perhaps with a touch of superiority because he knows things that others don't. That gives me a personality to work from. From there, I often build through voice. Once I find the right sound—whether through accent, pitch, or rhythm—it unlocks the character. Until then, I feel stuck. The voice is usually my way in.

Q: What excites you about the universality of Cymbeline?

A: Cymbeline is almost a "greatest hits" play. Shakespeare pulls together themes and devices he used throughout his career: mistaken identities, women disguised as men, jealous lovers, angry fathers, rustic characters who prove nobler than courtiers. There's even the famous "man hiding in the trunk" scene, and a potion that mimics death. Individually, you'll find all of these in other plays, but in Cymbeline they're woven together into one epic story. That makes it both challenging and thrilling to perform.

SHAKESPEARE OVER TIME

Shakespeare died in 1616, a little over 400 years ago. Today, he is one of history's most famous writers and is ubiquitously celebrated around the globe. But his reputation wasn't formed overnight; it took time to get here.

In 1623, his plays were published for the first time in the First Folio, and though Shakespeare was quite successful in his lifetime, it was only then that he started being lauded by other literary figures as a preeminent playwright. In 1642, the outbreak of the English Civil War forced theaters to close, and they remained so during the Puritan rule of England until 1660. When theaters reopened, there had been no new plays produced for 18 years and Shakespeare was one of a handful of past playwrights whose works became sought after for performance.

In the late 17th century, some literary critics and producers felt Shakespeare's plays could be "improved," and a number of bizarre aberrations came out, including a version of the tragedy King Lear that was given a happy ending. It wouldn't be for another 150 years or so that such alterations became widely disparaged. In fact, in the 18th century, much of Shakespeare's verbal comedy fell out of style, and authors tried to edit out his puns and sexual innuendo.

However, the 18th century also saw the actor and producer, David Garrick, popularize Shakespeare on the stage like never before, and his widely acclaimed Drury Lane Theatre ignited international acclaim for Shakespeare. The Romantic literary movement of the 19th century were so enamored of Shakespeare that playwright George Bernard Shaw called it "bardolatry." As the young United States was still developing its own theatrical style, revivals of Shakespeare dominated the stage. Celebrated actors like Edwin Booth, Ira Eldridge, and Ellen Terry cemented the idea that Shakespeare was the highest bar for stage performers. In the 20th century, Shakespeare was adapted into famous films and his plays became staples of secondary education.

Today, Shakespeare's plays are translated into over 100 languages and performed all over the globe. He is the world's most widely read and performed playwright.

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