

Winter 2024

## THE MAKING OF A PLAYWRIGHT

William Shakespeare's body of work is remarkably cohesive it seems he comes to us fully formed. Yet, it is possible to look at his apprenticeship years and trace his growth as a playwright even if it is not always linear. Shakespeare's mastery of plot, character and language is apparent even in his early work; his elucidation and exploration of themes without judgement is at this point a work in progress.

History, tragedy and comedy are all represented in this list of five plays building to his shortest and most compact play, the farcical masterpiece *The Comedy of Errors*. We start with the history of Edward III, the warrior English king whose lineage from Richard II to Richard III are the subjects of Shakespeare's history tetralogies. Shakespeare most likely authored only parts of the play, especially the delightful Countess of Salisbury scenes. The tragedy of *Titus Andronicus* is in the tradition of the revenge plays popular at that time; the graphic violence may have limited critical acceptance, but the meat pies have certainly seeped into the cultural subconscious. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has the seeds for most of the comic plots seen in later Shakespearean comedies, but it does carry its own charms, not least the lovely dog Crab and its master Launce who seems to see the dog as his master! Then we come to one of his most controversial and oft-performed comedies *The Taming of the Shrew*. Is the play misogynistic or does it do too good of a job portraying misogyny? By the time we arrive at *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare's mastery of tone in addition to plot, character and language is fully evident.

Plays are available free online through:

<https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/>

(Folger provides context for the plays in addition to providing full-text)

Suggested Print Edition: The Norton Shakespeare

Through their streaming movie service *kanopy*, library patrons also will have free access to 37 film versions of the plays that are part of BBC Television Shakespeare.

### **Additional Resources**

Collins, Paul. 2009. *The Book of William: How Shakespeare's First Folio Conquered the World*. 1st edition. New York: Bloomsbury USA.

Garber, Marjorie. 2005. *Shakespeare After All*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Garber, Marjorie. 2009. *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. Illustrated edition. New York, NY: Anchor.

Goddard, Harold C. 1960. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago London: University of Chicago Press.

### **Ancillary Programming (dates TBD)**

>Theatre during the time of Shakespeare- short talks during January – March discussions.

>Feb 10,11: DSO presents "Star-Crossed Lovers", exploring Romeo and Juliet in different iterations (Shakespeare's play, opera, ballet, musical).

>Mar 22, 23: An all-female adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* performed at Clarke University. Part of the NEA-funded "Shakespeare's Shrew through Brecht" grant.