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# The Shakespeare Project of Chicago



presents  
A "Theatrical Reading"  
of

# The Merry Wives of Windsor

Directed by- Scott Olson

Stage Manager: Mara Polster

Text Coaches:

Michael Behrens, Craig Bryant, Lindley Curry Traynor,  
 Todd Hissong, Mara Polster

Performances: November 6, 7 & 8, 1998

**The Shakespeare Project of Chicago** is partially supported by the Chicago Park District; by a City Arts 1 grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; the Chicago Public Library/ Harold Washington Center; and the voluntary contributions of our audiences. All Actors with **The Shakespeare Project** are members of **Actors' Equity Association** the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers



COME OUT AND PLAY

## Notes from The Director:

So it's time to sit down and write director's notes and say something profound about the play you're about to see. The problem is --I don't have anything profound to say. I can tell you that this play is very funny, that it's filled with characters who are very passionate and very lovable. And, at the end of the show, if you've had a few laughs and enjoyed meeting these people and been entertained by a good story-then we've done our job.

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a story about people who will go to extremes in the pursuit of two of mankind's eternal searches --love and sex. Having recently discovered love (and I'm not going to begin to tell you when I discovered the other), I can tell you I see myself mirrored in many moments of this play. I bet you will see yourself too.

Finally, what is with the TV theme songs? Well, I think if television would have existed in the Elizabethan Age, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* would have been the #1 show. Every week, nobles and peasants alike would tune in to watch the zany antics of Mistress Ford & Mistress Page, laugh at the mess that Falstaff always winds up in, and commiserate with poor Anne in her search for true love.

So, sit back, tune out the world outside, and tune in to this week's episode of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*!

- Scott Olson



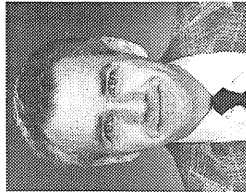
Marriott's Lincolnshire, The Court Theater, and many other great stages in the Chicago area and around the country. **TSP Chicago** currently presents monthly "Theatrical Readings" of the complete works of Shakespeare that achieve a clarity usually only accomplished by fully producing the plays.

Founded May 8, 1995, **The Shakespeare Project** was established as a vehicle to enable professional actors in Chicago to explore the complete works of William Shakespeare and of great dramatists, while working in the company of other actors with like experience and inter levels. In the process of bringing this founding concept to life, we have grown into our larger purpose. This includes the development and performance of productions, readings, workshop and other educational presentations that -- with emphasis on the language of the plays and skill of the actors (rather than extravagant production values) - challenge, educate, and entertain audiences of all ages and backgrounds. **TSP Chicago** is dedicated to promoting and maintaining a spirit of compassion and nurturance towards artists and the communities we serve.

Since November of 1995, **TSP Chicago** has been performing our trademark "Theatrical Readings" at various Chicago locations. The 1998 Theatrical Reading Series, "**Shakespeare the Park and at the Chicago Public Library**," has promised three free opportunities each month to see twelve of the greatest plays of Shakespeare's canon. Also this year, we expand our audiences to include the patrons of the Lincoln Park Cultural Center, located at 2045 North Lincoln Park West while enthusiastically continuing to serve our audiences at The Berger Pa Cultural Center and The Chicago Public Library/Harold Washington Center. Free public performances of each play are presented on **Friday evenings at 7:00** at the Lincoln Park Cultural Center, 2045 North Lincoln Park West; **Saturday afternoons at 1:00** at the Chicago Public Library/Harold Washington Library Center, 400 South State Street in the Main Auditorium; and **Sunday afternoons at 1:00** at The Berger Park Cultural Center, 6205 North Sheridan Road, in the Coach House.

Next month we begin our 1999 Season and celebrate **TSP Chicago's** completion of the entire canon (yea! Hooray!) with Shakespeare's masterpiece, *Hamlet* on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and we are still in negotiations for a potential new site for December 13<sup>th</sup>. Keep your eyes on your mailboxes for notification of the outcome. *Hamlet* will be presented in association with **The Great Books Foundation**, assisting in our post-show discussions and offering an extended discussion of the play at the Harold Washington Library Center on Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm. No, we do not have 1999 schedules yet. Sorry! However, please stay with us. In January, we begin the canon again with Shakespeare's first Comedy, *The Comedy of Errors*.

**The Shakespeare Project** is a nonprofit organization. You may send tax-deductible contributions to **The Shakespeare Project of Chicago**, 2706 North Albany Street, Chicago, Illinois 60647. To receive information on our performance dates, times and locations, fill our card as you leave the performance and you will be put on our mailing list. For further information or to book a reading, contact the **TSP Chicago** office at 773/252-5433. Email address [TSPchicago@aol.com](mailto:TSPchicago@aol.com). Be sure to visit our Website for monthly updates at <http://members.aol.com/TSPchicago>.



**Dennis Sook\*** (Host) Most recently appeared with *TSP* in *Othello*. He has appeared in many of *TSP*'s Theatrical Readings and recently appeared as a poker player in *The Odd Couple* at Candlelight's Forum Theatre. He's glad to be back in Chicago after working in New York for several years, where he appeared in commercials, on soaps, and Off-Broadway in *New Mexican Rainbow Fishing* and the baseball comedy *A Perfect Diamond*. Dennis was in the Actors' Studio production of Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending*. His career began touring with the National Shakespeare Company for two seasons. Dennis earned his Master of Arts degree from the City College of New York.



**Bartholomew Williams** (Fenton, Pistol) is happy to be back again playing Quintus and Publius in *Titus Andronicus* and making his debut with *The Shakespeare Project of Chicago* in *Troilus and Cressida* in June. He holds a BA in English and Theatre from Bradley University and a Master of Fine Arts from Wayne State University in Michigan, and has been a devotee of the Bard since elementary school. Most recently he has appeared at Meadowbrook Theatre in *Straw Soldiers* and *Wilderness*, assistant directed *The Waiting Room* at The Performance Network, and played Longaville in *Love's Labour's Lost* at Peterborough Players in New Hampshire.



**Scott Olson\*** (Director) is thrilled to be making his *TSP* directorial debut with *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Previous directing credits include *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Strange Snow*, *The Fantastics*, *Safe Sex* and *Grimms' Tales* at the Commonweal Theatre Company in Minnesota and *The Old Man and the Thief* at Muhlenberg College. As an actor, Scott has been seen with *TSP* in roles such as the Fool in *King Lear*, Moth in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Touchstone in *As You Like It*, Lavache in *All's Well That Ends Well*, the title role in *Henry V* and numerous other funny men and princes over the last two or so years. Scott has been seen locally in *Shear Madness* and with Bailiwick, Zebra Crossing, Chicago Dramatists, Shaw Chicago, and Chicspeare. Scott has worked with Florida Studio Theatre, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Denver Center Theatre Company. Look for him soon as the admissions counselor in a new commercial for DeVry. Scott is an acting teacher at Columbia College and, with fellow company member Craig Bryant, has formed **Power Of Two**, a monologue coaching business for local actors.



**Mara Polster\*** (Artistic Director) is happy to be following, beloved Company Member, Scott Olson's lead this month, after having benefited from his wisdom throughout the past couple of years. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* marks the end of our 1998 Season and next month *The Shakespeare Project of Chicago* hits our first HUGE accomplishment with *Hamlet*. We will have completed Shakespeare's entire canon. Don't fear, we will be starting again in 1999. *The Shakespeare Project* began in May of 1995 as a "fire in the belly" and has grown to an object of much pride and promise in the years that followed. Mara has acted on many of the stages here in Chicago and many others across the country. During her years as Founding Artistic Director of *TSP*, she has directed *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VIII*, *Comedy of Errors* (twice), *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Julius Caesar*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Othello*, *Loves Labours Lost*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* (three times), *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Coriolanus*, *Edward II*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *King Lear*, *As You Like It* and next month, the pinnacle - *Hamlet*. And been privileged to have performed many of her favorite roles by the Bard and to have provided similar opportunities to many other actors in Chicago. *The Shakespeare Project of Chicago* had its genesis in Loving Memory of, and continues to exist as the grateful commemoration of, two fiercely strong souls, Samuel E. LaMacchia (the sower of the seed) and Michael A. Wilson.

**Todd Hissong** (Text Coach) has appeared in many of *TSP*'s presentations since last spring's *Cymbeline*; most recently as Lodovico in *Othello*, and prior to that in the title role in *Titus Andronicus*. Todd has had a prolific theatrical career in his native Detroit where he most recently appeared as Sir Toby Belch in the Attic Theatre's acclaimed production of *Twelfth Night* (directed by Antoni Cimolino - Producing Director of the Stratford Festival). He has also worked extensively in local television - earning three Emmy's from the Michigan Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences- and his voice can be heard nationally on several commercials. This year Todd's profile will be included in Who's Who In Entertainment.

# The Shakespeare Project Presents The Merry Wives of Windsor

## The Players

(in order of appearance)

Robert Shallow, a country justice..... Gordon Fox  
Sir Hugh Evans, a Welsh parson..... Michael Behrens  
Abraham Slender, cousin to Shallow.... Andrew Powdermaker\*  
George Page, a gentleman of Windsor ..... Joe Damour  
Sir John Falstaff..... Michael McAlister  
Pistol, a follower of Falstaff..... Bartholomew Williams  
Host of the Garter Inn..... Dennis Sook\*  
Mistress Alice Ford..... Judy Blue\*  
Mistress Margaret Page..... Maureen Gallagher\*  
Anne Page, her daughter..... Lindley Curry Traynor  
Peter Simple, servant to Slender ..... Mary Ringstad\*  
Mistress Quickly..... Katherine Marie Loague  
Doctor Caius, a French physician.....Craig Bryant\*  
Fenton, a gentleman..... Bartholomew Williams  
Francis Ford, a gentleman of Windsor .....Peter Garino\*  
Robin, Falstaff's page..... Mary Ringstad\*

**Scene: Windsor, and the neighborhood**

There will be one 10 minute intermission

\* Denotes Core Company Members.

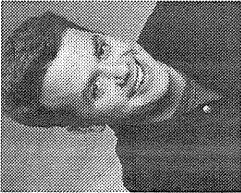
All Actors working with *TSP Chicago* are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.



**Michael Behrens** (Sir Hugh Evans) debuted with *TSP* last month as Montano in *Othello*. He has worked for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival as Fortinbras and Lucianus in *Hamlet*, First Murderer in *Richard III*, G-man in *You Can't Take It With You*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *White Devil*. Rosencrantz in *Hamlet* for San Diego Repertory Theatre, as well as both the Antipholus twins in *Comedy of Errors* for the Sacramento Theatre Company. He played the Antipholus twins again for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. He also played Cloten in *Cymbeline*, and Rumor in *2-Henry IV* in Illinois. At the Idaho Repertory Theatre Michael played Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Tuzenbach in *Three Sisters*, and Milo Tindle in *Sleuth*. Michael is currently producing the Chicago premier of the musical *Chaps* this spring.



**Judy Blue\*** (Mistress Ford) Recently appeared at the Organic Theatre Company as Lyssa Dent Hughes in *An American Daughter*. She has played many roles with *TSP* including Imogen in *Cymbeline*, Phebe in *As You Like It*, Regan in *King Lear*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Hero in *Much Ado*, Nurse in *Romeo & Juliet* and Portia in *Merchant of Venice* (just to name a few). Judy was Viola in Shakespeare Festival of Dallas' *Twelfth Night*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* at Stage West and Phebe in *As You Like It* at the Dallas Theater Center. In Chicago, roles include Desiree in *A Little Night Music* at The Goodman and Arlene in Apple Tree's *Baby*. She has appeared opposite Timothy Busfield in *Fool For Love* at B Street Theatre in CA and favorite roles include *Evita* and *Piaf* and also Alice and Elizabeth in the world premiers of Jack Heifner's *Homefires* and Horton Foote's *Valentine's Day*. Other theaters include Baltimore Theatre Project, Movement Theatre Inn'n'l, Henry Street New Federal Theatre in New York.



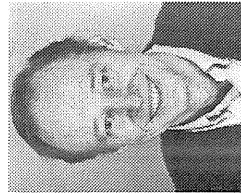
**Craig Bryant\*** (Doctor Caius) most recently appeared with *The Shakespeare Project of Chicago* as Orlando in *As You Like It* and prior to that as Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, Earl Rivers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Murderer and the Duke of Norfolk in *Richard III* and the title role in *Richard II*. Craig has appeared in productions at the Goodman Theatre, Shakespeare repertory, Mayfaire Theatre and various local stages with the comedy troupe, "Wilde Boys". He has performed regionally at the Hartford Stage Company and The Indiana Repertory Theatre and also toured nationally in John Houseman's "The Acting Company."



**Lindley Curry Traylor** (Anne Page) debuted with *The Shakespeare Project* in September as Miranda in *The Tempest*. Her other Chicago credits include *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare Repertory), *Emma's Child* (Victory Gardens), *The Nerd* and *Charley's Aunt* (Candlelight's Forum Theatre), and *Bobby Gould in Hell* (Center Theatre Ensemble), for which she was recommended for a Joseph Jefferson Citation. Lindley spent a season with the Orlando Shakespeare Festival, three seasons with the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival, and toured with the KSF's educational outreach program. Lindley was an original member of Boom Chicago, the Amsterdam-based improv/sketch comedy troupe.



**Joe Damour** (Page) was last seen as Enrique in The Court's production of *The School for Wives*. (The show was recently recorded for airing on WFMT through the good graces of Chicago Theater On the Air.) He also understudied Fran Guinan in David Hare's new play *Skylight* at the Steppenwolf Theatre. Other Chicago appearances include Lord Shrewsbury in Shiller's *Mary Stuart* at the Gnu Yak Theatre, Chebutykin in three *Sisters* at the Footsteps, and *The Subject Was Roses* at Stage Left. Then there are shows in sweet places like Santa Fe as Donny in *American Buffalo*, Yepikodov in *The Cherry Orchard*, Touchstone in *As You Like It*, the father in Shanley's *The Dreamer Examines His Pillow*, as well as the crazed husband in *The Conduct of Life* by Maria Irene Fornes. And he is very happy once again to be on board with *The Shakespeare Project* and this happy production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.



**Gordon Fox** (Shallow) is a new arrival from Dallas, TX and is pleased as punch to have made his Chicago stage debut with *TSP* last month as the Duke and Gratiano in *Othello*. His Texas credits include: *The Tempest* at Ft. Worth Shakespeare Festival, *Ion* and *Harvey* at Stage West, *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* at Texas Shakespeare Festival, *Inherit the Wind* and *A Christmas Carol* at The Alley Theatre, *Phantom and Carnival* at Lyric Stage. Other regional credits include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at Kentucky Shakespeare Festival, *The Elephant Man* and *The Fantastics* at Ozark Actors Theatre), *Abie's Irish Rose* and *Girl Crazy* at Mill Mt. Theatre, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *On Golden*



**Maureen Gallagher\*** (Mistress Page) has appeared with *The Shakespeare Project of Chicago* as the Queen in *Cymbeline*, Goneril in *King Lear*, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the Duchess of Gloucester in *2-Henry VI*, Constance in *King John*, Thaisa in *Pericles*, Lady Macduff and a Witch in *Macbeth*, and Calpurnia in *Julius Caesar*. She has performed at The Goodman Theatre, The Body Politic Theatre, Nex Theatre, Remains Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, Wisdom Bridge Theatre, Shakespeare Repertory, Court Theatre, Shaw Chicago and in The Claudia Cassidy Series at the Chicago Cultural Center.



**Peter Garino\*** (Ford) is a long standing member of *TSP* and a member of its Board of Directors. He has appeared as an actor in over fifteen of *TSP's* Theatrical Readings and directed three others. Favorite roles include Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Warwick in *2-Henry IV*, Mortimer in *Edward II*, Hubert de Burgh in *King John*, Camillo in *The Winter's Tale*, Banquo in *Macbeth*, Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Marc Antony in *Julius Caesar*. Peter is the creator of one of The Shakespeare Project's outreach programs, entitled "*My Name is Will*," a theatrical adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets and songs which will be presented by *TSP* next March. Other credits include work with Steppenwolf Theatre, Organic Theatre, Body Politic Ensemble, Equity Library Theatre, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival (1981, 1982, 1984) and the Hofstra University Shakespeare Festival (1974-1977).



**Katherine Marie League** (Mistress Quickly) recently moved to Chicago for NYC. Kate performed with Classic Stage Company (CSC) - directed by Christopher Martin (when it was a rotating repertory company). At various theatres she enjoyed a diverse body of work; for the Greeks to Chekhov, to originating roles in plays by Constance Congdon and Edwin Sanchez. She had the good fortune to be directed by Marshall Mason in *Hot L Baltimore* and *Summer and Smoke*. Kate had a 3-year commitment to Performing Arts for Crisis Training (PACT) as an Actor/Trainer. She has joined SAG's Book Pal program with Chicago grade schools. She is delighted to begin working in Chicago with *The Shakespeare Project*.



**Michael McAlister** (Falstaff) debuted with *The Shakespeare Project* in May as Pisano in *Cymbeline* and since, played Agamemnon in *Troilus and Cressida* and Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well* and Alonso in *The Tempest*. Other Chicago credits include: Konkin in Michael Maggio's world premiere production of *Black Snow* (Goodman), Captain Cat and Cherry Owen in Michael Barto's long running *Under Milkwood* (Café Voltaire and The Theatre Building), Herman Glogauer in *Once in A Lifetime* (Court) and Santa Claus in two productions of *A Shiny New Christmas* with The Ed Vodka Singers (Navy Pier and The Historic Pickwick).



**Andrew Powdermaker\*** (Slender) A regular on *The Shakespeare Project* stage Andrew was last seen as Roderigo in last months Theatrical Reading of *Othello*. Other roles for *TSP* include: Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*, Paris in *Troilus and Cressida*, Cloten in *Cymbeline*, and Somerset in *I Henry VI*. With the Equity Library Theatre, Andrew has played Lieutenant Osborne in *Journey's End*. Originally from Philadelphia, Andrew earned a BA from Temple University. Favorite Philly roles include: Lysander in *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Chestnut Hill Shakespeare in the Park, and Warren in *Moon Over the Brevary* in the Walnut Street Theatre's showcase studio. Andrew can also be seen in the film *Last Call*. Look for it in the Chicago Film festival next year. He would like to thank his wife Flo for all her support and her precious expectations.



**Mary Ringstad\*** (Simple, Robin) is happy to once again bring back to the *TSP* stage her characterization of Falstaff's page, which she originally created for last season's presentation of *2-Henry IV*. Other *TSP* roles include Desdemona in *Othello*, Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Lady Anne in *Richard III*, Margaret in *1-Henry VI*, Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing*, an Prince Edward in *Edward II*. Also for *TSP*, Mary directed *Love's Labor's Lost* and served as assistant director for *King Lear*. Mary has performed in theatres across the country, particularly when she appeared in the national tour of *CATS*. Mary has an MFA in Acting from Ohio University.