

More Hamlet haiku

Hamlet - woe is he...
Hey dude, would you like some cheese
to go with that wine?

Gertrude - Queen, Mother
Who wouldn't choose Claudius -
His sword is bigger!

So your dad is dead -
Get over it already!
He liked me better.

Ophelia - dead?
Laertes, it's no big deal
Now you inherit!

Anon I'll return,
wait to say "I hate that name!",
and get myself killed.

Alas, poor Yorick!
I remember him, Horatio.
Wasn't he taller?

"What is the Play? And
What is My Part?" Alex asked.
You little Hamlet.

pay no attention
to what's behind the curtain
ow ow ow ow ow

dealt a mortal blow
but before i die, here's a
few more dozen words

men can be such creeps
can flowers be used as a
flotation device?

till death do us part
they said -- so i departed
how 'bout some more wine?

Hamlet, welcome back.
Here's the wager--will you fight?
Nothing! Neither way!

*Many thanks to Kevin, Leanne, Calvin, Alan, and Sean,
founding members of Too Much Free Time Theater*

THE RUDE MECHANICALS



HAMLET

November 2,3,10,11,17,18

Laurel High School \$10 ²⁰⁰⁰ Students & Seniors \$5
www.rudemmechanicals.com

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George's Arts Council, PGAC Super Circle, and The Maryland National
Capital Park & Planning Commission.*

THE
Tragicall Historie of
HAMLET

Prince of Denmarke

By William Shake-speare.

As it hath been diverse times acted by his Highnesse ser-
vants in the Citie of London : as also in the two V-
niversities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere
At London printed for N.L. and Iohn Trundell.
1603.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Claudius, King of DenmarkKevin Hollenbeck
Gertrude, his QueenTina Segovia
Hamlet, her son by Claudius' brotherAndy Greenleaf, Alan Duda
Fortinbras, Prince of NorwayDavid Rusiecki
Polonius, First Minister of DenmarkJaki Demarest
Laertes, Polonius' sonSean Eustis
Ophelia, Polonius' daughterLauren Zambreny
Osric, a noblemanCalvin Smith
Horatio, Hamlet's friendRachel Zirkin
Rosencranz, Hamlet's friendLeanne Mitchell
Guildenstern, Hamlet's friendB.J. Mitchell
A gentlewomanKelly Slagle
a captainStephen Fitzgerald
Bernardo, a soldierColin Goldberg
Francisco, a soldierPeter Eichman
Marcellus, a soldierLarry Simmons
a priestDavid Shaklan
the actor who plays the kingJoshua Engel
the actor who plays the queenLeah Hall
the actor who plays the murdererLarry Simmons
the PrologueAlex Mitchell
gravediggersPeter Eichman, Arthur Adams
a pirateLarry Simmons

CREW

AD/Stage ManagerChenoa Jones
Stage Combat ChoreographyKevin Hollenbeck
Set DesignJack Wibbe
Sound DesignJack Wibbe
Sound EngineeringKevin Hollenbeck
AD/LightsGwyn Mitchell
SoundKendra Simmons
AD/PropsLeanne Mitchell
CostumesLeanne Mitchell, the cast

The scene: the royal palace of Denmark, in Elsinore. The play will last about three hours, and we will have two intermissions.

We are the Rude Mechanicals. Next spring we will bring you a special adaptation of Shakespeare's trilogy, *Henry VI*, in a one-night rendering of the whole story of England's Wars of the Roses – romance, treachery, and a whole lot of (PG-13) violence. For the rest of 2001 we will do *Twelfth Night* and *Lion in Winter*. We will begin 2002 with *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Tempest* in summer. For further information, you can call us at 301-317-9438, or check out our website: www.rudemmechanicals.com, or email mail@rudemmechanicals.com.

We would like to thank –

Andy and Alan, for taking on one of Shakespeare's most brutal roles and for sharing it amicably;
Annaliese and Lee Moyer, for support and great art (and for the Poofey Wedding Dress);
Tina, for making such extraordinary progress in technique that she needed virtually no directing;
Lou, Tina and Paul, for lending us the musical recordings we needed for this show and the next one;
Kim, for volunteering to chase props;
Josh and Leah, for untangling the dumb-show in the play within the play;
Leah, for being a very fast learner;
Stephen, for doing a variety of thankless jobs and for splitting his role without complaint;
Rachel, for her patience in being cast first as a bimbo and now as a man;
Larry, for doing good stuff in three different roles;
Alex, for stealing the scene as he always does;
Josh, for taking various business headaches off of my hands;
Dave Shaklan, for providing not only a priest but also transportation;
Ms. Garber down in Upper Marlboro, for solving our most critical problem with the school;

Calvin, for doing a superb job in a role that is easy to screw up;
Arthur, for stepping in to play gravedigger part-way through the rehearsals;
Colin and Peter, for getting Scene 1 off to a good start;
Peter for pinch-hitting as a gravedigger;
Dave Rusiecki for volunteering to do a teeny role and for doing it well;
Sean, for not only doing a solid Laertes but also helping to square away the combat;
Kevin for working the stage combat, especially the extra twist just before Hamlet's departure to England;
Jaki for working the directing aspect of Ophelia's last scene, and other various directing assistance;
Kathy Kehoe, for decorating our ladies with jewelry;
BJ for offering to help in two headache areas, music and costumes;
Doug, Cidera and our families for support and much patience;
Leanne, Gwyn and Chenoa, for the masterful way you swooped in and managed the audition process, and helped with the casting process;
Chenoa also for acting as actor-wrangler and problem-solver;
Gwyn, for working her magic with the lights yet again;
Lauren, for saving my sanity after any one of a number of rough rehearsals;
Kendra, for coming in late in the game to settle the sound issue;
...and above all, Leanne again for saving my bacon on costumes, props, set, casting and a hundred other things.
...and for everyone else who pitched in after the program went to press, or who saved my bacon when I didn't have my list with me to write it down so I could remember it!

Please turn off signal watches and cellphones during performances.
No smoking is allowed in the building.
In case of emergency, WALK do not RUN to the nearest EXIT.

Cast and Crew Bios

Arthur C. Adams (*First Gravedigger*)
He wears pants again
And jokes with a Great Dane
But mostly digs holes.

Alan Duda (*Hamlet*)
Dear H,
A Roasted Toasted
Is SUPPOSED to smell that way!
It's almonds, you see?
- h

Dear Uncle King Dad,
I hate you! and Elsinore!
The dread pirate H.

Joshua Engel (*Player King*)
I asked for bios
Concise and terse like haiku
Taken lit'rally

Sean Eustis (*Laertes*) I sez to the Director,
"Yeah, I think I'd like to play Laertes. I just
don't want to play a character like I did in
Macbeth who shows up at the beginning,
waits through the middle of the play, and then
shows up at the end and gets killed." ... dang.

Andrew Greenleaf (*Hamlet*) is thrilled to play
this infamous title role. Thanks Jack! He
directed RM's *Much Ado*; has played many
Shakespeare roles: Malcolm, Lysander,
Edgar, Alexas, Mecaenas, Scarus, Antipholus,
Edward, etc; trained at Shakespeare Theater
and Roundhouse; performed with SSS, GAC,
CLS, PGLT, and RLT (including last year's
Ruby Griffith runner-up). Carpe Diem!

Leah Hall (*Player Queen*) makes her state
debut with the Rude Mechanicals and has
loved every minute of it! She would like to
thank Jack Wibbe for this opportunity, Josh
for his input and instruction, Jaki for her
insight, Kevin for his wisdom and Sean for his
float-on-air dance moves. Last but not least,
thanks to her friends Tami, Bethann, Radeen,
Terry and John for their support and the times
they listened.

Kevin Hollenbeck (*Claudius*)
i am not evil
i am Bic Pentameter!
it's all about ME!

Alex Mitchell (*Player Prologue*)
I do little parts
That's okay I'm very cute
I'm a little guy

BJ Mitchell (*Guildenstern*)
Another bad guy
Another toady again
Just misunderstood

Gwyn Mitchell (*Lights*)
I just do the lights
Sometimes I die on stage
It is MY spotlight

Leanne Mitchell (*Rosencrantz*)
A witch, a servant
Now a dead chick? Nah! She's just
pining for the fjords.

David Rusiecki (*Fortinbras*). is happy to return
to the Rude Mechanicals after last summer's
Much Ado About Nothing. Many thanks to
Jack, Andy, Alan and Rachel.

Tina Segovia (*Gertrude*) This is my third
production with the Rude Mechanicals this
time I am happy to report I finally get to die
(wheee!) Much thanks to the Mitchell's, Jack
and Lauren for all their support and
friendship.

Larry Simmons (*Marcellus, Player Murderer,
Pirate*)-Larry has been acting since 1998.
Previous plays have been *King Lear*, *Richard
III*, and the "Scottish play" as well as
numerous productions with Burtonsville
Players. Love to his family. Thanks to Josh
for the dance lessons!

Calvin Smith (*Osrice*) has been involved in
theatre in Laurel for about five years now.
This is his first Rude Mechanicals show.

Rachel Zirkin (*Horatio* - not a "ho") has been
phenomenally busy in community theater this
year and is grateful to the Rude Mechanicals
for their help in that endeavor! Much thanks
to Andy, Alan, Jack and everyone else for
their amazing efforts!

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET

What would you do if everything you cared
about, everyone you loved, was taken away from
you in an instant, almost as if a tornado or
hurricane had scored a direct hit on your life?
And what if the only way to get it back was a
veritable suicide mission that was almost
certainly going to get you killed?

That is the dilemma facing Hamlet, the Prince
of Denmark. Hamlet was the son of the old king,
also named Hamlet. Old Hamlet spent years
teaching young Hamlet how to be a king,
because young Hamlet was destined by law to
become king once old Hamlet died. Hamlet had
it all: he was first in line to the throne,
surrounded by friends, his father loved him
dearly, his mother adored him, and he was head-
over-heels in love with Ophelia, daughter of old
Hamlet's first minister, Polonius.

Then, without warning, and all at once, it is
all taken away. First, old Hamlet dies under
suspicious circumstances. Hamlet loses his
father, the center of his world. That by itself
would be a devastating blow, enough to bring
any of us to our knees. But Hamlet's woes are
just beginning:

Next, old Hamlet's brother Claudius — young
Hamlet's uncle — grabs the throne for himself
instead of letting young Hamlet become king as
the law demands. Claudius has the soldiers he
needs to prevent Hamlet from taking his rightful
place on the throne.

Hamlet hopes to turn to old Hamlet's trusted
first minister, Polonius, for help. But Polonius
turns her back on Hamlet and supports Claudius.

Then Hamlet turns to his mother, Gertrude,
for help. Does she help him? No. Instead, she
marries Claudius — right after burying her first
husband, old Hamlet.

Then his friends betray him too. His
childhood friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
side with Claudius. Only Hamlet's best friend,
Horatio, sticks with him.

Worst of all, Ophelia. He turns to the
woman he intends to spend the rest of his life
with — the woman to whom he has entrusted his
innermost thoughts — but finds that Polonius
has ordered her to break off her relationship with
Hamlet. Rather than defying the parental voice,

Ophelia has obeyed, and has even given Polonius
the letters which Hamlet has written to her;
Polonius has shown these letters — containing
Hamlet's most private thoughts — to his enemy,
Claudius.

His father is dead, his throne has been stolen
by his uncle, and the two women he loves have
gone over to the enemy, along with most of his
friends. One thing about adversity, it shows you
who your real friends are.

And a lot of that happens even before the play
Hamlet begins. The first time we see him, he has
suffered so much pain and felt so much rage that
he is numb with shock. He is overwhelmed by
events that he never could have imagined and is
totally unprepared for, and pain more powerful
than anything he has ever experienced before.
His first soliloquy is practically spoken in a daze.

So what does Hamlet do? Claudius is in a
position of overwhelming power, and he knows
Hamlet expected to sit on the throne himself.
Claudius has a horde of soldiers to protect him.
Claudius' spies watch Hamlet constantly — even
Polonius and Ophelia are pressed into service to
watch him. Hamlet is effectively a prisoner in his
own castle (note that Claudius never lets Hamlet
come near him with a weapon, until the very
end). Hamlet knows that any effort to re-take
what is rightfully his will certainly head to his
arrest and execution. He knows that the only
reason he is alive at all is that his mother,
Claudius' new bride, asked Claudius to spare
Hamlet's life as a sort of wedding present — but
if Hamlet pushes Claudius too far, Claudius will
stamp him out.

Hamlet's precarious position was intimately
understood by the audiences of Shakespeare's
time. The pages of English history were littered
with the dead bodies of young princes who were
dominated by scheming uncles, forcibly removed
from power, and then mysteriously murdered.
Audiences of that time knew that from the very
first scene, Hamlet's life hung by a thread, and
that the odds of his survival were very poor
indeed. They knew how lonely it was to have the
royal sword hanging over one's head, especially
since Shakespeare had conveyed similar stories
regarding Richard II and Henry VI — both of
whom died friendless and alone — and the two
doomed nephews of Richard III.

Hamlet's dilemma is compounded by the fact that even if he were to attack Claudius and win, a very unlikely prospect — what then? Is it worthwhile to rule as king over people so corrupt and venal? Does he even want to live in the same court with people for whom betrayal comes so easily? He is more comfortable with common soldiers, actors and gravediggers than with the bootlicking courtiers with whom Claudius has populated his court. Does Hamlet want to look up from his soup at state dinners and see Polonius, Gertrude and Ophelia, the people who ran away when he needed their help? Why even live in such a country? In fact, why live at all, if one is to be surrounded by such people?

Some critics complain that Hamlet dithered too long before taking action, but here's a little perspective for you: when Tiger Woods is faced with a serious challenge like an important putt, he hesitates — he takes ten practice swings before putting the ball. And that's just knocking a ball in a hole to win a game — Hamlet is faced with a situation involving very high stakes, namely his own almost-certain death, and unlike Tiger Woods he is overwhelmingly expected to lose, not win. Wouldn't you hesitate a little? Why should he be in a hurry to (practically) commit suicide? If Indiana Jones is allowed to hesitate before stepping out into a chasm, Hamlet surely has the right to look things over before leaping into the lion's mouth, so to speak. He is clumsy, yes, but a ditherer? No. If anyone dithers, it's Claudius — he's the man with all the power, and if he had any gumption, he would have arranged an immediate "accident" for Hamlet, an area in which he had some experience.

Note also that Hamlet wins practically all his confrontations with Claudius: whenever they see each other, Hamlet either snubs Claudius, goads him or openly insults him, and gets away with it. Considering the fact that Claudius is looking for any excuse to kill Hamlet, Hamlet is actually a very plucky individual. And his pluck is rewarded with success in his ultimate mission, even though he pays a heavy price for it. A triumph, not a tragedy.

Ophelia is trapped in a dilemma almost as precarious as Hamlet's. Juliet and Desdemona found themselves in love with men whom their fathers hated, but they did not have much respect

for their fathers by Elizabethan standards — they simply ran off and eloped. Ophelia's situation is much more difficult, in that she is being pulled in two opposite directions: although she loves Hamlet, she also loves Polonius dearly, and her brother Laertes. She fears that Hamlet is going to perish in the inevitable collision with Claudius and Polonius, but she also understands that if she wavers in her loyalty to the powers that be, she could be destroyed as well. So when Claudius and Polonius entice her into the king's web of treachery, she lacks the strength to resist.

By the midpoint of the play she feels the guilt of having betrayed both sides — she hurt Polonius by loving Hamlet, then hurt Hamlet by abandoning him. She lives under unbearable, terrifying strain, like a cat who finds herself in the middle of a battlefield, watching two armies rumble toward her from opposite sides of the field, hoping against all logic that she can avoid being trampled in the ensuing carnage.

About the Play

Laurence Olivier, who knew the theater about as well as anyone who ever lived, called *Hamlet* the greatest play ever written. Everyone has their own favorites — *Lear*, *Streetcar*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* — but there is no denying that *Hamlet* clings to our collective psyche as *the* play, the prince as *the* role for an actor. Virtually every classical actor in England must try the role once, almost like a compulsory exercise in gymnastics, to "make his bones" as the mob guys might say. The image of a young prince in black and white, perusing a skull, adheres in our collective memory, and the text reverberates throughout the centuries — the famous soliloquy, Hamlet's advice to the players, Polonius' advice to Laertes. It has been staged and filmed endlessly — I have six filmed versions at home. It has been spoofed by everyone from Jack Benny to Tom Stoppard to the cast of *Gilligan's Island*. It is universal.

But why is this play such a big deal? Is the play really that good, or is it considered good simply because it has *always* been considered good, one of those classics revered but never read, something to be endured because of an educational requirement — *Paradise Lost*, *Finnegan's Wake*, *War and Peace*?

The answer is, yes, it really is that good: otherwise we wouldn't have staged it. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare gives us one amazing scene after another, and makes us believe them. A queen marries her brother-in-law before her first husband's body is cold; a parent breaks up a daughter's romance; the ghost of a murder victim cries out for revenge; a prince pretends to be insane and contemplates suicide; a murderer sees a play which closely copies his own crime, and loses control; a king comes very close to being murdered while praying; a son fights with his mother while standing over a dead body; a man scrutinizes the skull of a dead friend; a plot is hatched to poison the heir to the throne; two men fight inside a grave and then resume their fight with swords. A king is murdered in front of the whole court, and a foreign army invades in the middle of it all. Wow!

Above all, Hamlet resonates with anyone who has felt that no one cared about the troubles they had to face. What is more universal than that?

But the play is no mere conglomeration of big scenes and plot contrivances. It gives us rich characters, led by one of Shakespeare's most remarkable heroes: Hamlet himself. Othello was tripped up by self-doubt and a hankie; Lear by his idiotic retirement plan, Romeo by a missed message, and Brutus by three dumb decisions with respect to Marc Antony (to let him live, to let him speak to the Romans, to fight him at Phillippi). Hamlet however is faced with a real challenge: to change, or destroy, an entire world that is irretrievably corrupted. It is a no-chance suicide mission. And he is still basically a kid, as yet unmeasured against the challenges of the world: his first job as an adult is as assassin.

And Hamlet is not the only fascinating character: we see Claudius, the criminal hoping to avoid detection; the Ghost, burning in hell because he was murdered before he could confess his sins; a queen who married too soon after her first husband's death, and is trying to reconcile her son and his stepfather; Laertes, thirsting for revenge just as Hamlet is; Ophelia, who is ordered to break off her romance; Fortinbras; eager to be accepted as a leader of men; Polonius, Osric, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, hoping to realize their dreams in Claudius' court without getting caught in the

crossfire between Claudius and Hamlet; Horatio, who must think she is the only sensible person in Denmark; the gravedigger; who *is* the only sensible person in Denmark; and the actors, who win the dream gig — a job at the palace — and then see it all blow up in their faces.

With Hamlet's help we will examine universal themes such as dysfunctional families, guilt, stepparents, ambition, parental interference in the romances of the young, and efforts by the middle-aged to recapture the romance of youth. Even those who have seen it before will see something new, because each Hamlet is different — the lead role forces an actor to bring a lot of himself to the play. Even actors who have played him in the past go back to the script and find new nuggets of magic that they missed the first time. Watching Hamlet take on the biggest challenge imaginable — a suicide assassination mission — while also pondering whether to live or die, contemplating the nature of man and the virtue of friendship, and finding the courage to calmly await whatever fate has in store for him, is simply irresistible.

This is the *Hamlet* we chose to stage. A lot of people do *Hamlet* for the wrong reasons: because classical actors need it for their resumes, because directors want to exploit it for their own philosophical purposes (hippie Hamlets, communist Hamlets, Nazi Hamlets) and so on. To my mind, using *Hamlet*, one of the best scripts ever put on paper, as a soapbox platform for the pedestrian musings of lesser talents, is like using a Louis XIV cabinet as a base for softball trophies (and I say this as a big softball fan). We wanted to go back to the original text and show why everyone went bonkers over the play in the first place, why it became a literary icon. We combed through the script exhaustively to illuminate every bit of Shakespeare's magic, to make all clear, to clear away a few obscurities of time and language, while trimming it down to a manageable three hours. We are staging it largely as Shakespeare did — minimal sets, sound, lights, props, costumes — to let the brilliant script, and its hero, speak for themselves