

The Ugly Shakespeare Company

presents

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)

By **ADAM LONG, DANIEL SINGER** and **JESS WINFIELD**

By arrangement with Music Theatre International (Australasia)



The Ugly Shakespeare Company
Celebrating our 30th Touring Year with:

DIRECTOR Lara Macgregor

CAST Gregory Cooper, Nick Dunbar and Kelly Hocking

SUITABLE for Years 7 -13

School Tool

Learning outcomes and goals for The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged).

Through active learning and the laugh-out-loud comedy of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged), students will learn that theatre is for life.

This UGLY SHAKESPEARE SCHOOL TOOL is flexible. Teachers can dip in and dip out of the commentary and combine activities to suit student needs. Please note that, in this School Tool, “students” and “you” are used interchangeably. Teachers are referred to in the third person.

Please send us any comments you have on the show and this school tool. It is important to us that we work closely with and for our communities.

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Director's Welcome

Kia ora and welcome!

This year, The Ugly Shakespeare Company is excited to celebrate 30 years of touring Aotearoa, New Zealand, bringing Shakespeare's stories to schools, towns, and communities just like yours. To mark this special milestone, we're performing the very first play we ever toured with - the show that inspired The Ugly Shakespeare Company all those years ago! The play we're sharing with you is over thirty years old and loved by audiences all around the world, including in the USA and the UK. The original creators, the Reduced Shakespeare Company, are even performing it right now on the other side of the world.

I have a special connection to this play. I saw the original version in New York in the 1990s, directed it for The Ugly Shakespeare Company in 1996, then again for Dunedin Summer Shakespeare in 2024, and now I get to bring it to you in 2026. What keeps me coming back? It's simple: this play is timeless. It's full of energetic stories, hilarious parodies, silly jokes, and clever updates that make it feel brand new every time. The writers encourage us to add in today's references, so the comedy stays fresh and fun for everyone.

Sometimes people think Shakespeare is hard to understand or a bit "hoity toity." But our motto is: We Take the Fear Out of Shakespeare! This show is the perfect way to discover that Shakespeare can be fun, silly, and easy to enjoy—even if you've never liked Shakespeare before.

"It's easy to see why this play is still so popular. Shakespeare's stories are perfect for parody. While it's cheeky, fast-paced and full of laughs, at its heart it celebrates everything that makes Shakespeare great—his wild stories, epic battles, love, loss, and amazing language." - Adam Cook

It takes serious skill to create such wild, physical comedy, and this year, I'm absolutely fizzing to have Greg, Kelly, and Nick on stage. Watch how they use quick thinking, clever timing, and high-energy performance to deliver every joke and scene. Their teamwork and talent make every show amazing to watch!

So, enjoy the laughs, learn something new, and remember—Shakespeare is for everyone! I hope you finish the show with a big smile and say:

"For this light relief, much thanks!"

Ngā mihi nui,

Lara Macgregor

Creating The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged).

1. Synopsis

37 plays in 97 minutes! How do they do that?
I don't know - it's a mystery!

Can three players really cover thirty-seven Shakespeare plays in less than two hours? This fast-firing comedy does just that as it parodies all of the Shakespeare plays with only three performers in two acts.

This play is full of energy as the characters run across the stage and keep you guessing how they will pull off the next play. Clever use of some interesting costumes also adds to the fun.

The play starts with an eccentric version of *Romeo and Juliet*, followed by a parody of *Titus Andronicus* (which is portrayed as a cooking show). Next is *Othello*, where Greg misinterprets the meaning of the word 'moor'. The members of the trio compete in a hilarious rugby game which summarises the histories (King John, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV etc), complete with commentary and details of each character's rise and fall from power.

As the characters are about to come to the end of the first act, they realise they forgot to perform *Hamlet*. One of the actors becomes nervous and runs out of the theatre with another actor chasing him. In the original version, the final actor is left to entertain the audience by himself, which he does by telling jokes and calling for the intermission. After the intermission, the missing two actors return and save their companion from reciting all of the sonnets. (However, in our version, to make

the show accessible to schools' timetables, we don't take an intermission but keep running the play right through until the end.)

All three actors go on to perform their very abbreviated version of *Hamlet* (with a little help from the audience), thus "completing" the canon in only two hours!

2. An abridged history of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*

Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield (then Borgeson) created *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*.

They are the founders the Reduced Shakespeare Company or the **RSC**. Not to be confused with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Since 1981, they have created five world-renowned stage shows, four TV programmes, and numerous radio pieces, including a holiday special.



Date	Event
1981	A few young performers set out to create a half-hour version of Hamlet for the Novato California Renaissance Pleasure Faire. Singer himself said: "the result was far more comical than I had originally planned. Our venue was hot, dusty, noisy, and full of distractions. Holding an audience's attention was unusually challenging. Drunken hecklers, intrusive parades, and backstage confusion forced us to improvise bits . . . which constantly improved as our schtick evolved." ³
1983	They add a shortened <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> to their repertoire.
1987	They premiere and tour <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)</i> to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, as a one-hour show, thinking that will be the end of the show's life.
1989	<p>The RSC begins to tour the United States.</p> <p>Singer leaves to become an engineer for Disney. He is replaced by Reed Martin, who also contributes to the show.</p> <p>In order to make Shakespeare a full-length show, the RSC adds audience participation in the second act.</p>
1990	A six-week sell out season in Montreal, and the performers can quit their day jobs. They take the show to London.
1992	They tour the US, Singapore, Perth, Adelaide, and London. Borgeson is replaced Austin Tichenor.
1994	The RSC creates a six-part radio series based on <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)</i> .
1994	Long cuts back on touring.
Since 1993	The company's many international performances include stops at the White House, Kennedy Centre, Lincoln Centre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Montreal's "Just For Laughs Festival," the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Israel Theatre Festival, extensive overseas tours to Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Japan, Israel, Singapore, Bermuda, and Great Britain, and countless civic and university venues from Alaska to Florida and Hawaii to Maine.
1995	The Ugly Shakespeare Company tours <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)</i> .
1996-2003	Long directs a production in the heart of theatre land in London (the West End). It is nominated for best new comedy - a high theatre accolade there (an Olivier Award). This is 17 years after its first inception!
2000	The RSC films Shakespeare for television aired in 2001 by PBS.
2003	Long goes solo as a writer and director.
2026	45th anniversary of RSC.

3. The playwrights and the Reduced Shakespeare Company

ADAM LONG

Founding Member/Writer/Performer

Before “falling into” the business of Shakespearean performance, which he deemed only a hobby, Adam Long was an accountant, musician, and stand-up comic.

However, of the original three, he stuck it out the longest, not leaving RSC until he had delivered Ophelia’s modified line “I’m out of my tiny little mind” more times than even he could count. His particular specialties were Shakespeare’s women, all of whom were said to “look alike and suffer from indigestion,” (Gussow). In defense of the Winfield, Singer, Long paring down of Shakespeare, he cites a poem by Allen Ginsberg: “I saw the best minds of my generation / Destroyed by madness / Starving, hysterical, naked; / Dragging themselves through the negro / Streets at dawn / Looking for an angry fix” (Howl, Kaddish and Other Poems [London, Penguin, 2009]). “I knew,” continued Long, “that we weren’t [really] the best minds of our generation, but we were starving and hysterical. And we often went without clothes” (Writer’s Notes, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*).

Long went solo as a writer and director in 2003; he has since abridged another’s distinguished canon, the works of Charlie Dickens, or Dickens Unplugged.

DANIEL SINGER

RSC Founder/Writer/Performer

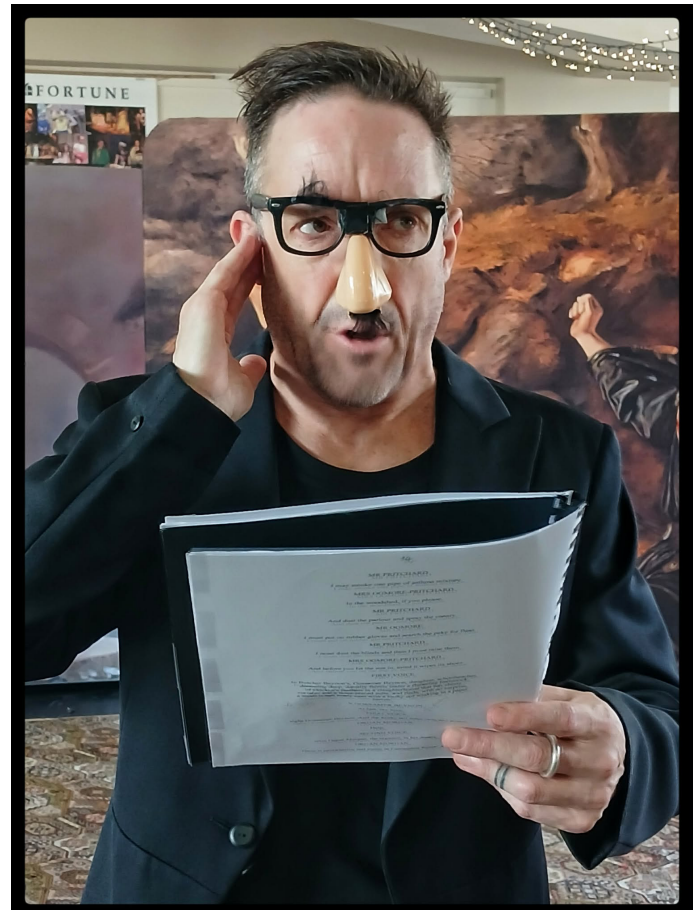
In 1981, inspired by Stoppard’s *The Dogg’s Troupe* *The 15-minute Hamlet*, Daniel Singer, an American and recent student of drama at the Guildford School near London, dreamed up the outline of what was to become *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*.

Singer held auditions for his amateur production, which initially was just a half-hour *Hamlet* and a much-reduced *Romeo and Juliet*

(proudly performed in mall courtyards). Singer, along with Adam Long and Jess Borgeson, who later changed his name to Winfield, emerged as the primary performers, eventual founders of the RSC, and co-authors of the world’s most condensed Complete Works, clocking in at a dizzying ninety-seven minutes. They “juggled Shakespeare’s plays as if they were hot coals,” showcasing their stopwatch performances world-wide, from Washington D.C. to London’s West End, to Israel, Malta and Bermuda” (Mel Gussow, *The Essential Shakespeare, as You Might Like It, in Two Hours* [Theatre Review: *New York Times*, 1991]).

Miraculously, “instead of pooh-pooing this preposterous attempt by three eternally adolescent American[s] . . . the critics went wild with admiration” (Cavendish).

However young at the time of the RSC’s inception, Daniel Singer was no novice to theatre ingenuity; at the age of eighteen he co-founded the General Amazement Theatre in Santa Rosa, California, which produced three plays, including Singer’s own musical adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*.

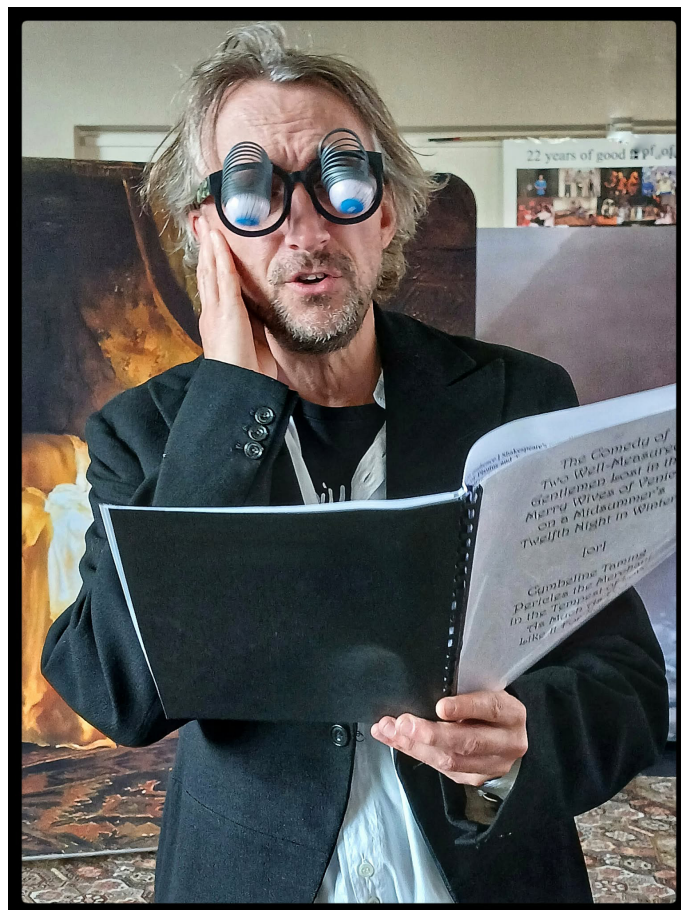


Though he started the mad ball rolling, Singer was the first to flee the fast lane of “Bardian abridgment.” In 1989 he left RSC and went to work as an Imagineer at Walt Disney; here, among other things, he helped design mini-theme parks Splash Mountain, Toontown, and Indiana Jones. Singer also helped organise another acting troupe, The Flower Street Players, for which he co-produced six plays, as well as directed and starred in *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

JESS WINFIELD

Founding Member/Writer/Performer

Perhaps the most outspoken of the three, Jess Winfield (because no one could pronounce Borgeson) theorised that “every theatregoer, deep in his heart, wants to see Shakespeare ripped to shreds; we fulfil that fantasy” (Entertainment Tonight, Weekly Edition, July 2, 1989). He must have assumed that the populace felt similarly about James Joyce, for Winfield has since satirically reduced Joyce’s great work *Ulysses*: *Jam Joy Yes*, his self-proclaimed personal best.



After resigning from RSC, he too, went to work for the magical world of Disney, earning two daytime Emmy awards for his work on the television series *Teacher’s Pet* starring Nathan Lane and Jerry Stiller. He has also worked on feature films, including *Leroy & Stitch! The Movie*. In 2008, he wrote *My Name is Will: A Novel of Sex, Drugs and Shakespeare*.



During their illustrious collaboration, Winfield, Singer, and Long displayed supreme confidence in *Master Will’s* good humour; when asked to conjecture what the orthodox playwright would think of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, Jess Winfield confidently replied “Shakespeare would not only approve of their play, he would go bowling with them after the performance” (America’s Talking Network, “Break a Leg, with Bill McCuddy,” 1995).

Still, however devoutly these men practice the belief that “brevity is the soul of wit,” their acts of abridgment, at least as far as the great Shakespeare is concerned, are not without some conscience: “the deed is done,” Adam Long softly laments. “May the Bard forgive us” (*The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)*, xxii).

4. The Aotearoa, New Zealand, Creative Team

The Ugly Shakespeare Company and He Waka Eke Noa Charitable Trust

The Ugly Shakespeare Company has a proven record in New Zealand schools. For 30 years, the Company provides accessible, relatable, entertaining, and thought-provoking shows that take the fear out of Shakespeare and introduce students to new New Zealand theatre.

He Waka Eke Noa Charitable Trust (a canoe on which anyone may embark) proudly administers The Ugly Shakespeare Company. The Trust has a particular focus on nurturing youth arts. It has produced 30 national theatre tours, produced several plays, 2 award winning short films, a web pilot, numerous festivals and arts events, and offers Rangitahi Residencies for youth driven new work, yearly.

He Waka Eke Noa Charitable Trust curated and operates The Factory Theatre (a 120 flexi-seat theatre) and Kete Aronui (a five-room rehearsal venue) in Onehunga. In 2012, the Trust also established KickArts, a weekly arts radio show on PlanetFM, then handed it over to another organization to run in 2020.

LARA MACGREGOR (NGĀTI TOA)

Producer/Director

Lara studied acting in New York City with Uta Hagen, Anthony Abeson and Tony Greco. She worked for ten years as an actor in the U.S.

Lara holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Directing from The National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney and has directed over 40 productions in the last decade.

In 2009, Lara was appointed Associate Artistic Director at The Court Theatre in Christchurch, and in 2010 became Artistic Director at Fortune Theatre in Dunedin. Amongst her many directing highlights, she most recently directed *Prima Facie* for her newly formed theatre company – Birds of a Feather.

Since 2015 she has been freelancing across all disciplines with multiple companies throughout Aotearoa.

Recent acting credits include Fran in *Things*

I Know to Be True (Brilliant Adventures); *Deborah* in *Bad Behaviour* Dir: Alice Englert; Mrs Roidern in *One of Us is Lying* (Netflix); and Sgt Gillian Carmichael in *Clickbait* (Netflix).

GREGORY COOPER

Ensemble

Gregory's career began at The Court Theatre in 1993. His credits include *The Complete History of New Zealand*, *The Underpants*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Niu Sila*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Easy Money*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Elling*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *The Wind in the Willows* and, most recently, *The End of the Golden Weather*.



His other theatre credits include *The Complete History of Christchurch*, *The Complete History of World Rugby*, *Howzat! The Complete History of Kiwi Cricket* (CCC Summer Theatre season), *Le Sud* (Auckland Theatre Company), *Niu Sila* (Fortune Theatre), *The Complete History of the Royal New Zealand Navy* (RNZN), *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged* (Dunedin Summer Shakespeare) and *Every Brilliant Thing* (Birds of a Feather Productions).

He wrote *MAMIL* (*Middle Aged Man in Lycra*), *MAMIL 2: GOMIL* (*Grumpy Old Man In Lycra*), *The Streaker*, *Mr & Mrs Macbeth*, and co-wrote the suffragist rock musical *2Graves* (LAF), *That Bloody Woman*. His directing credits include *MAMIL*, *GOMIL*, *Mr & Mrs Macbeth*, *Steel Magnolias* (Court Theatre), and the pantomimes *Cinderella* and *Beauty & The Beast* (GMG Productions).

Questions for Gregory

1. *What is your process as an actor, when preparing a character for performance? Is it different for Shakespeare?*

With any character the first thing I do is look for as many clues in the script that can help with understanding how they act and react in the play. Often some of the most valuable character information can be found by how other characters interact and react to the character you're playing. Sometimes I'll try and think of people I've met in real life who may have similarities to the character I'm playing

to see if there's any traits I can use to start building the physicality or vocal qualities. I also find costume very useful to help prepare/build a character, so the earlier I can start, 'walking in their shoes', the better. From there it's mainly a process of trying different things and making new choices during the rehearsal process, in conjunction with the director and other actors, to see what feels 'right'.

Shakespeare has that extra step of developing a clear understanding of the language, which at first glance can be quite incomprehensible. Learning the meaning of the words and knowing precisely what each line means in modern language is essential. Once you've done that research you know what word needs to be placed to make it as easy as possible for the audience to understand what the character is saying.

2. Given the improvisational nature of this production and the audience participation required, how do you prepare for this during the rehearsal period and prior to each performance?

It's always tricky to rehearse the improv/audience interaction sections without an audience. In some plays the other actors who aren't onstage can pretend to be audience members and call things out or be brought on stage to pretend to be an unwitting volunteer, but with *CWOWSA* we're pretty much all on stage all the time so this wasn't possible. Our director was always happy to call 'audience suggestions' out, but she also had a million other things to be focused on, so mostly you just have to pretend there's an audience there. As with acting, the most important skill in improv/audience interaction is listening, you have to treat the audience as another character, and anything they call out is an offer to be used in the scene. Anything an audience volunteer does on stage that takes you by surprise is usually a gift of comedy gold, so the secret is not to be thrown by an audience 'curve-ball', but to react honestly and nine times out of ten it will be the audience's favourite part of the show.

3. What do you think school audiences will enjoy from this production?

This is a very silly show with lots of wonderful verbal and physical comedy that I think the school audiences will enjoy. My character in particular is essentially a 'naughty-child' who doesn't really know anything about

Shakespeare, doesn't really like Shakespeare, and keeps unintentionally winding the other characters up, often by vomiting on the audience which I'm hoping the school students will be able to relate to. It's one of those fast-paced, slapstick, very silly shows where the students learn a lot about Shakespeare but are laughing so much they don't realise they're being educated.

NICK DUNBAR Ensemble

Nick trained at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School graduating in 2003 and has a BA degree in German, Modern Lit. and Film, and a DipGrad in Theatre Studies from Otago University.



Theatre credits include *Up For Grabs*, *Big River*, *Who Needs Sleep Anyway?*, *Turbine*, *Live at Six!*, *The Spy Who Wouldn't Die Again* and *Le Sud* at Downstage, *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well* and *Living In Paris*, *Drinking Games*, *Chekhov In Hell*, *Aladdin*, *The ACB*, *King Lear* and *Mary Stuart* at Circa Theatre, *Never Swim Alone*, *Jeff Koons*, *Metamorphosis*, *Turbine*, *Lonely Heart* and *Christ Almighty* at Bats Theatre, *The Biggest* and *Mum's Choir* at The Court Theatre, and at the NZ International Arts Festival in *King And Country*, *The Trial of The Cannibal Dog* and *Candide*.

Nick was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the New Zealand TV and Film Awards for his role in the television series *Insider's Guide To Love*. Other TV credits include *Shortland Street*, *Super City 2*, *Paradise Cafe*, *M.I.F.*, *Wanted*, *Brokenwood*, *The Gone*, and *A Remarkable Place to Die*.

Other appearances include *Penumbra* for the Auckland Arts Festival, The NBR New Zealand Opera's productions *Lucia Di Lammermoor* and *La Boheme*, and roles in the feature films *Show of Hands*, *Aftershock* and *Until Proven Innocent*.

Questions for Nick:

1. What do you think is the difference between acting for screen and acting for the stage?

Acting for stage and screen both come from

the same truthful place, but the way that truth is shared is very different.

On stage, the performance needs to travel — emotionally, physically, and vocally — all the way to the back row. You're telling the story in real time, without cuts, so there's a real sense of energy and connection between the actors and the audience.

Screen acting is more intimate and internal, because the camera does the travelling for you. On stage, you have to do that work. I love stage acting because it demands presence, commitment, and a deep connection to the audience in the moment.

It can be quite magical. Seeing a story happen right in front of you — with real people, real emotions, and real stakes — makes theatre feel accessible rather than distant.

There's also something powerful about watching actors commit fully to a story. It invites the audience to use their imagination, to empathise with the characters, and to see that storytelling isn't just something you watch on a screen — it's something you experience together.

2. Do you have any special preparations that you do before each performance?

Before every performance, I focus on preparing both my body and my mind. I warm up physically and vocally to make sure I'm free, relaxed, and ready to communicate clearly.

I also take time to reconnect with the story and the character — reminding myself what they want, what's at stake, and why this moment matters. Even though the show stays the same, the audience is always different, so I treat every performance as a fresh experience.

3. What do you think school audiences will enjoy/take away from this production?

I think school audiences will really enjoy how immediate and alive this production feels, to empathise with the characters, and to see that storytelling isn't just something you watch on a screen — it's something you experience together.

The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged) turns something that can feel

intimidating into something fast, physical, and genuinely funny.

Students get permission to laugh at Shakespeare, to enjoy the stories without feeling like they need to "get it right." Through comedy, we strip the plays down to their core ideas — love, power, jealousy, ambition — and suddenly they feel recognisable and relevant.

I also think students take away confidence. They see that Shakespeare isn't something distant or untouchable; it's playful, human, and adaptable. If they can laugh with it, they can engage with it — and that often changes how they feel about studying it in the classroom.

It's fast, physical, and very ensemble-driven, so students can feel the teamwork and trust between the actors as the story races along.

The physical comedy and constant character shifts keep the show lively and unpredictable. There's a cheekiness to it that invites students in — it breaks the rules a little and shows that Shakespeare doesn't have to be treated as something fragile or intimidating.

I also think students enjoy seeing actors fully commit to something bold and silly. That level of commitment gives them permission to laugh, to relax, and to experience Shakespeare as something human and fun rather than something they have to analyse straight away.

What I hope they take away is confidence — confidence that Shakespeare is accessible, and that theatre can be playful, collaborative, and alive.

KELLY HOCKING

Ensemble

Kelly graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles in 2003 and is currently completing her Master of Arts Degree at the University of Otago.

Theatre credits include Fortune Theatre - *Avenue Q*; *Boeing Boeing*, *Into the Woods*; The Court Theatre – *Grease*, *Fun Home*; *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, and



Wicked. Kelly is also a writer and performs stand-up comedy.

Kelly is the Principal Director of The Voice Lab NZ, which provides vocal coaching and professional development for other voice coaches. They also have a specialist care team supporting Aotearoa's professional vocalists, which includes injury prevention, rehabilitation, and tour preparation. www.voicelab.nz

Kelly is a proud member of Equity New Zealand.

Questions for Kelly:

1. Tell us more about your vocal work, that sounds amazing.

The majority of my vocal work is centred around vocal health and sustainability. I blend contemporary voice science and vocal pedagogy to devise strategies for performers to expand their vocal range and power and to ensure they produce their voices comfortably and consistently. If an actor (or other professional vocalist) loses the ability to reliably produce quality sound, whether due to an illness or injury, it can seriously impact their livelihood. My goal is always to alleviate fear, find solutions, and give performers confidence in their vocal production. I've built my skills by studying voice for many years, including working alongside other voice care professionals, including Speech Language Therapists, Otolaryngologists, and Voice Physiotherapists. And - it is extremely helpful being a performer myself because I understand the stakes.

I do occasionally coach accent work, particularly regional American dialects. I use the International Phonetic Alphabet (also called IPA, a fantastic, sound-based system of symbols) to establish key sounds and identify how the articulators (tongue, lips, jaw, soft palate, etc.) need to configure to produce them. I often use I.D.E.A.'s (International Dialects of English Archive) fantastic website to find recorded examples of the dialect I'm coaching.

2. How can voice work help performing Shakespeare?

Because Shakespeare's works were written in a time before mechanical amplification, the

works themselves are often performed in the same way. Having no microphones means the performers must utilise their bodies to amplify their voices, including breath work and changing the shape of their outer and inner facial muscles to create more space for resonance. The term 'breath work' is so vague, so let me try to explain this better! The longer and slower the 'exhale' portion of the breath, the more stability and control it generates. When we speak, the body is exhaling simultaneously. Longer lines of text, such as those found in Shakespeare, need a longer, more controlled release of air so that the actor can maintain volume and clarity throughout these phrases. Another example of this is 'holding back breath' when speaking so that the air is released more slowly. People often think pushing more air out faster creates volume, but it is precisely the opposite.

Shakespeare's texts intentionally utilise assonance, consonance, rhyming schemes, and other language devices that require the articulators (the tongue, lips, jaw, and soft palate) to be mobile. Encouraging flexibility in these areas is key to honouring the text and getting the most out of the sound.

3. Can you tell us how you feel rewarded in your theatre work?

Oh, in so many ways! I feel rewarded when I get to work with incredible colleagues who also care deeply about the project we're working on. Regardless of whether the other artists involved are people I've known forever or only just met, it's energising to collaborate, play, and laugh. (It's important to stress that there is always laughter in rehearsal, even when working on the most serious of pieces.) I feel rewarded with the conversations I have with audience members after shows. It never ceases to amaze me how certain audiences find meaning in sections of the piece that I had never considered, or what certain people take away from a performance. This is particularly rewarding when I've had the chance to represent characters on stage that have had little representation in the theatrical landscape. When I watch theatre, I feel most rewarded when I'm surprised. By a plot point, an acting choice, a casting choice, the lightning, the music, any element that catches me off guard. Magic.

Theatre Craft

5. What is theatre and what's in it for us?

It is hard to pin down a meaning of "theatre" without it being both too broad and too limiting, particularly as it evolves with multi-media forms and is always innovating. For the purposes of today's show, we can define it as "a play or similar with performers" and, more importantly, an "audience". That's you - although you may end up being a performer too.

This play is part abridging Shakespeare and part improvised. It includes pop culture references.

What's in it for us? There are many ways that theatre is for your whole life.

- ❖ It can be pure escapism. Time to switch off from the world and enjoy a theatrical spectacle - the "wow factor". Theatre for theatre's sake.
- ❖ Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet that theatre is "the mirror up to nature," showing us life as it is and letting everyone's voice be heard, especially those who are rarely heard. It can reflect on everyone such as political leaders, communities, whānau, and you.
- ❖ Performers and audience members can find self-expression and connections leading to empathy which can have a huge impact on all sorts of audience members and our world.
- ❖ Theatre can come in the form of all of the above. It is often best to make the audience laugh so they will cry by the end. It can create meaning through storytelling and the themes explored.
- ❖ The audience is the key to live theatre. The audience gives instant feedback through laughing, gasps, or active listening. Therefore, every night is different - performers may give different nuances based on that night's audience. That is a huge difference between screen and stage.
- ❖ Another difference is the role of the director. In theatre, the audience can look at any part of the stage at any time. With film or tv shows, through choice of shots,



the director has much more control over what you focus on.

- ❖ Theatre is inherently a collaborative art. There is a team who direct, perform, design technologies (set, props, lighting, sound, costume), stage manage, market, produce, and administrate. There is, of course, the playwright(s) who may get help from a dramaturg. We want you to laugh during the show, really enjoy it and dust off any concerns about Shakespeare or theatre - that's known as audience development. Collaboration means that the collaborators are bringing the best out of each other - do more combined than they could individually.
- ❖ Theatre can be innovative in process, form (such as writing or devising), and performances.

6. Comedy

There are many forms of comedy whether through written plays, improvisation, vaudeville, satire, or stand-up comedy.

The New Victory School Tool lists five tools of comedy:

- Imagination of the performer to create entire worlds and absurd characters
- Surprise to catch audiences off-guard for a joke
- Character which can go to extremes
- Physicality to show the impact of objects, places, or emotions
- Facial expression showing what they are thinking or feeling.

It can take years before you become an expert. Practice makes perfect. Some further ideas:

- abridgement & parody which you see in the show
- improvisation especially responding in the moment
- reincorporation where you make a joke in the first part of the show and then revisit it later
- the timing of comedy is ... critical
- relevance of material
- self-effacing humour - we're not so good at that
- observational humour - where audiences go "oh, I hadn't thought of it like that"
- having two disparate objects or ideas and showing the link in a surprising fashion
- going up what is referred to as the "comedy curve" - performers or writers start at something believable but then it gets sillier and sillier until it is ludicrous but somehow plausible (if you suspend disbelief), and
- finally, reincorporation.

Can you recognize any of these forms of comedy used in the show?

7. Improvisational theatre

Although *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* follows a script, it owes much of its comedy to the traditions of improvisational theatre. In an improvised play, actors are working without a script, using a variety of techniques and games to create the piece right before the audience's eyes. An improvised play is always a one-of-a-kind event.

One of the pioneers of improvisational theatre is Keith Johnstone, an Englishman who worked at the Royal Court Theatre in London for 10 years, then moved to Calgary, where he founded

Loose Moose Theatre Company and developed the techniques used by TheatreSports companies across the world. In Johnstone's experience, most people have been taught to stifle their creativity, and he sought ways of helping them release their imaginations. His mission was to bring spontaneity back to the theatre by encouraging the performers to take risks and embrace failure. He also sought ways of making the audience more active participants.

A typical improv show features a number of sketches in which the actors use audience suggestions to create a story from a very loose template. The actors must be willing to play along with each other's ideas and able to adapt quickly to the play's ever-changing shape. At its best, improvisational theatre is exhilarating to watch—like star athletes, gifted improvisers provide a vicarious thrill when they are "in the zone."

Can you identify three moments where Kelly, Greg and Nick are improvising?

8. Pop Culture

The play contains a number of allusions to pop culture, items or ideas of common or popular knowledge, usually very current, mentioned but not actually explained or explored within the text as the author presumes the reader will understand the connection. Within *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* these allusions are used for comedic effect.

This show has developed through improvisation over more than twenty years. Though some sections, like Hamlet, have remained almost unchanged, other sections, like the football scene, have been adapted to suit popular media as well as the various locations of the production. (It has been portrayed as a rugby, soccer, or Aussie Rules footy.) While the script published by Applause Books in 1994 was replete with references to Ronald Regan and Chernobyl, the most recent authorized script copy, which the Utah Shakespearean Festival 2009 production uses, includes updated references to the following: The View, iPod, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, Barack Obama, LOL, and Desperate Housewives.

Give three examples of the use of popular culture references in the play.

Shakespeare

9. The complete works of William Shakespeare¹

The History Plays

Henry VI Part I, II & III
Richard III
King John
Edward III
Richard II
Henry IV Part I & II
Henry V
Henry VIII

The Romances

Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter's Tale
The Tempest
The Two Noble Kinsmen

The Comedies

The Comedy of Errors
The Taming of the Shrew
The Two Gentlemen of Verona
Love's Labour's Lost
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Merchant of Venice
The Merry Wives of Windsor
Much Ado About Nothing
As You Like It
Twelfth Night
Troilus and Cressida
All's Well That Ends Well
Measure for Measure

The Tragedies

Titus Andronicus
Romeo and Juliet
Julius Caesar
Hamlet
Othello
King Lear
Macbeth
Antony and Cleopatra
Coriolanus
Timon of Athens

10. Conventions of Shakespearean comedy²

In its broadest definition, a comedy is a play with a happy ending. The form originated in ancient Greece in association with fertility rituals, so it is no accident that most of Shakespeare's comedies end with a marriage and sometimes a sly reference to the "happy event" that is expected in nine months' time.

One critic describes Shakespeare's comedies as "whimsical love-tales acted out in improbable places by charming aristocrats." Almost all of the comedies are romantic stories in which the lovers must overcome a series of obstacles in order to be united. These obstacles are sometimes external, but more often than not are the result of the lovers' own foolishness, pride, or wilful blindness. Events usually reach a high point of ridiculousness before order is restored.

Elements found in many of the comedies include:

- A pastoral setting, sometimes imbued with magical elements (e.g., the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)
- Disguise (sometimes across gender) and mistaken identity leading to great complication
Parallel plots involving high (aristocratic) and low (servant) characters, or an inversion of the usual power dynamic between classes
- The eventual reunion of long-separated family members
- A conclusion involving at least one pledge of marriage.

¹ Student Guide: Howard

² Study Guide: Howard

11. Shakespeare's Legacy

Shakespeare's plays are still performed all around the world. Why? Many people say it's because they talk about feelings we all know, like love and jealousy. Contemporary versions can be created to give a modern twist on his classic tales.

Shakespeare is also known for his use of language. If the right word didn't exist, he'd make one up.

If you want to know how poetry is effective in theatre, his language is a pretty good starting point.

Shakespeare's words were made to be heard, not just read. It's a bit like listening to a song—you don't have to understand every word to enjoy it! Sometimes, the way words sound can help you know what's happening, like sharp sounds for arguments or soft sounds when someone is in love. So enjoy the ride.

Modern day lyrics may be indistinguishable from Shakespeare's language.

Shakespeare wrote in everyday language, prose, and poetry. We know therefore that he could write in everyday language but he chose not to most of the time. He made very clear use of it. There were less written stage directions in those days so he gave the actors clues about who/where they were and what they were doing, through the poetry.

One type of poetry he used is called iambic pentameter. This means each line has five beats, like de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum** (can be referred to as a heart beating). If you read **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, you'll notice its regular, musical rhythm. In **The Tempest**, Shakespeare played around with the rhythm helping actors know how to say their lines. They say it is like jazz.

He also used special tricks to make words sound interesting: like alliteration, assonance, and similes. Onomatopoeia is when a word sounds like what it means, like buzz or bang.

Let's try an activity with the line "fair is foul and foul is fair" from Macbeth. The teacher divides the class into three groups. One group says "fair" in a light, gentle voice as possible. Another says "foul" in a rough, ugly voice. The last group says "and" and "is". Put it all together and listen to how the sounds show the opposites in the line! When opposites words are closely put together, you know something isn't right.

12. Shakespeare's Life¹

For all his fame and celebration, William Shakespeare remains a mysterious figure. There are just two primary sources for information on the Bard: his works and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Naturally, there are many gaps in this body of information, which tells us little about Shakespeare the man.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, allegedly on April 23, 1564. Church records from Holy Trinity Church indicate that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household—three of whom died in childhood. John Shakespeare had a remarkable run of success as a merchant, and later as an alderman and high bailiff of Stratford, during William's early childhood. His fortunes declined, however, in the 1570s.

There is great conjecture about Shakespeare's childhood years, especially regarding his education. It is surmised by scholars that Shakespeare attended the free grammar school in Stratford, which at the time had a reputation to rival Eton. While there are no records extant to prove this claim, Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin and classical Greek would tend to support this theory. In addition, Shakespeare's first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, wrote that John Shakespeare had placed William "for some time in a free school." John Shakespeare, as a Stratford official, would have been granted a waiver of tuition for his son. As the records do not exist, we do not know how long William attended the school, but certainly the literary quality of his works suggest a solid education. What is certain is that William Shakespeare never proceeded to university schooling, which has stirred some of the debate concerning the authorship of his works.

The next documented event in Shakespeare's life is his marriage to Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. William was 18 at the time, and Anne was 26—and pregnant. Their first daughter, Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583. The couple later had twins, Hamnet and Judith, born February 2, 1585, and christened at Holy Trinity Church. Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11.



For seven years, William Shakespeare effectively disappears from all records, turning up in London circa 1592. This period of Shakespeare's life has sparked much controversy. Rowe notes that young Shakespeare was quite fond of poaching, and may have had to flee Stratford after an incident with Sir Thomas Lucy, whose lands he allegedly hunted. There is also rumour of Shakespeare working as an assistant schoolmaster in Lancashire for a time, though this is circumstantial at best. It is estimated that Shakespeare arrived in London around 1588 and began to establish himself as an actor and playwright. Evidently, Shakespeare inspired

envy early on for his talent, as related by the critical attack of Robert Greene, a London playwright, in 1592: "...an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his own conceit the only Shakespeare in a country."

Greene's bombast notwithstanding, Shakespeare must have shown considerable promise. By 1594, he was not only acting and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the ascension of James I in 1603),

but was a managing partner in the operation as well. With Will Kempe, a master comedian, and Richard Burbage, a leading tragic actor of the day, the Lord Chamberlain's Men became a favourite London troupe, patronized by royalty and made popular by the theatre-going public. When the plague forced theatre closings in the mid-1590s, Shakespeare and his company made plans for the Globe Theatre in the Bankside district, which was across the river from London proper. Shakespeare's success is apparent when studied against other playwrights of this age. His company was the most successful in London in his day. He had plays published and sold in octavo editions, or "penny-copies," to the more literate of his audiences. It is noted that never before had a playwright enjoyed sufficient acclaim to see his works published and sold as popular literature in the midst of his career. While Shakespeare could not be accounted wealthy by London standards, his success allowed him to retire in comfort to Stratford in 1611.

William Shakespeare wrote his will in 1611, bequeathing his properties to his daughter Susanna (married in 1607 to Dr. John Hall). To his other daughter, Judith, he left £300; and to his wife, "my second best bed." William Shakespeare allegedly died on his birthday, April 23, in 1616. This may be a romantic myth, but Shakespeare was interred at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25. In 1623, two working companions of Shakespeare from the Lord Chamberlain's Men, John Heminges and Henry Condell, printed the First Folio edition of the Collected Works, of which half the plays contained therein were previously unpublished. The First Folio also contained Shakespeare's sonnets. William Shakespeare's legacy is a body of work that will never again be equaled in Western civilization. His words have endured for four hundred years, and still reach across the centuries as powerfully as ever. Even in death, he leaves a final piece of verse as his epitaph:

*Good friend, for
Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust
enclosed here.
Blessed be the man
that scares these
stones,
And cursed be he that
moves my bones.*

13. The Globe²

Most of Shakespeare's plays were originally performed in The Globe. James Burbage (the father of Shakespeare's star actor, Richard – who originated the roles of Hamlet, King Lear, Othello among others) owned a theatre called simply The Theatre. When the owner of the land refused to renew his lease, James and his son, along with about a dozen actors and thugs, dismantled the entire building one winter's night in 1599 and used the wood to build the Globe in a different location in South London (the rough side of town).

The Globe was a polygonal, roofless building that provided balcony seats (known as the gallery) for the wealthy and standing-room only space on the dirt floor for the common people ('the groundlings'). During a production of *Henry VIII* on June 29, 1613, fireworks which were used to announce the entrance of the king ignited the thatch on the roof of the gallery and burned The Globe to the ground. Even after being rebuilt, the Globe never retained its previous glory.



Schedules

SCHEDULE ONE

ACTIVITIES

Before the show

Name of activity	Guidelines
Questions for you to consider	<p>What do you know about Shakespeare's works?</p> <p>Have you seen his work performed before whether on stage, tv, film, or the internet?</p> <p>How do you feel about going to see a show about Shakespeare?</p>

After the show

Name of Activity	Guidelines
Questions for students	<p>What did you take away from the show?</p> <p>Do you think theatre could become a lifelong interest or, even, a passion? If so, why?</p> <p>Can creating theatre help with any jobs? If so, describe the job and how theatre can help.</p> <p>What did you learn that you didn't know before?</p> <p>If you knew a play before, what parts of the story were there or not? Why do you think those choices were made?</p>



<p>Write a review¹</p>	<p>Write the play's name and playwrights, the date you saw the show, and your name (as reviewer)</p> <p>What were the names of the three performers?</p> <p>What was your favourite part of the performance?</p> <p>Did you have a least favourite part? Why?</p> <p>Did anything stand out to you? The set/costumes/props.</p> <p>Overall, what did you think of the experience?</p>
<p>Play some improvisation games²</p>	<p>* <i>Yes and</i> - students work in pairs to create a scene. They link arms and one student will start with an action which they both do. The second student says "yes and", then contributes the next action which they both do. And so on...</p> <p>* <i>One word at a time</i> - the class gets in a circle and creates a story. In turn each student adds a word.</p> <p>* <i>Gibberish Interpreter</i> - the teacher organises students into groups of four. Two students act out a scene in complete gibberish and high physicality. They pause after each line (or pair of lines) allowing the other two students, standing on the side, to interpret the scene.</p>

<p>Create a character physically³</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Students start walking around the room at a moderate pace then varied * Students to try leading from different parts of their bodies such as the head. Now the chest, now the gut/pelvis. Other parts of their body. <i>Does anything feel different? What does it feel like?</i> * Students to choose one form of the walking they have just done that they enjoy or want to explore more * Students choose a prop and consider different ways of using it. <i>What if they discover or drop it?</i> * Students to choose one action with the prop and rehearse with it * Students to experiment with how their character would speak. Try variety of accents, pitches, and tempos. Students to talk to one another in their character voices. * Students could create a monologue in character. Or a group could ask the rest of the class for a location and then improvise a scene in character.
<p>Create an abridged version of a narrative of a text⁴</p>	<p>Divide the class into groups and give them a written narrative (of a text that is being studied). The group is to reduce it to one paragraph and then present it within a minute - perhaps with each group member having at least one line to encourage teamwork.</p> <p>To do this they need to think about what is essential.</p> <p>They could then see if they could reduce it to 30 seconds or 10 seconds.</p> <p>Discuss each presentation with the class afterwards.</p>
<p>Create own scene taking into consideration elements of the show</p>	<p>Create (write, devise, or improvise) and perform original works).</p> <p>As this show is a touring show, there isn't room to experiment with lighting and sound. Students could look at lighting, sound, set, costumes and props for their own show and consider how to incorporate with their own performance work.</p> <p>Rehearse, refine, and present their work back to an audience, using feedback to improve clarity, impact, and performance quality.</p>

Schedule 2

Goals and Outcomes

(Ages 7 - 13 years)

In the arts, students explore, refine, and communicate ideas as they connect thinking, imagination, senses, and feelings to create works and respond to the works of others.

Goals and outcomes of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*

- ❖ The kaupapa of the Ugly Shakespeare Company - to take the fear out of Shakespeare (an otherwise complex theme, plot and language). *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)* exemplifies turning language and stories on their heads to make Shakespeare's works accessible and relatable. The up-to-date pop culture references help too.
- ❖ The show is highly theatrical. It is both a spectacle and a tool to encourage students to see that Shakespeare (and theatre) is for life.
- ❖ Based on Shakespeare, the play is both script-based and improvised with no small degree of physicality.
- ❖ One of the core values of The Ugly Shakespeare Company is to support local practitioners.
- ❖ The meaning in this accessible and relatable touring production includes not just fearing Shakespeare. Students are engaged in theatrical language to develop self-expression and empathy. Further, to understand parody, you have to understand the underlying work.
- ❖ Students can go on to create their own work, influenced by the show. Working in groups they can experience the collaborative nature of theatre.
- ❖ *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* has buckets of aspects such as body, space, time, energy, voice and relationship, and is particularly high in energy levels. It is educational and will deepen students understanding of theatre and self-expression.
- ❖ The play allows for broad comedy which, counterintuitively, is one of the most demanding theatre skills requiring excellent timing and experience. Comedy requires the utmost skill in choreography. Actions and words must be sharp to be clear, particularly where the language includes puns.
- ❖ The play is full of energetic transitions, core to the production, carrying one scene to another.
- ❖ The play uses costume and props in a ridiculous fashion aimed to make audiences laugh - enhancing the performance.

- ❖ The show has had years in development creating performances with layered meaning and audience awareness
- ❖ The performers' answers to questions go into a lot of detail about how they rehearse and prepare for performances
- ❖ It is live performance (with key differences to screen time) and creates dramatic literacy
- ❖ students may find and express their individual voices in a creative context; developing empathy for all
- ❖ students see collaboration and innovation first-hand
- ❖ All that theatre provides: critical thinking, analysis, improvisation, writing, and comedy/tragedy skills leading to production and performance
- ❖ Shakespeare's language, universal themes, and ongoing influence, engaging with his works through comedy, parody, and improvisation
- ❖ a range of theatre roles such as directing, performing, designing, and technical work
- ❖ connection to their own goals, careers, and community contexts - combining school and community resources
- ❖ through improvisation, responding in the moment, a skill that attracts employers.



Schedule 3

Sources and further reading:

Citations:

Study Guide: Howard	Study Guide, <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)</i> by Alison Howard for State Theatre Company South Australia © 2011
Utah Shakespearean Festival	Copyright © 2009, Utah Shakespearean Festival. Reproduced: Study Guide, <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)</i> by Alison Howard for State Theatre Company South Australia © 2011
RSC website	https://www.reducedshakespeare.com/
The New Victory School Tool	School Tool: the New 42nd Street
School curriculum	https://newzealandcurriculum.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/new-zealand-curriculum-online/new-zealand-curriculum/curriculum-documents/5637144666 .

Other resources

Shakespeare in Neon Colors by Olga A. Pilkington

<http://www.uop.edu.jo/download/research/members/CompleteGuide.pdf>

Royal Shakespeare Company

www.rsc.org.uk

Shakespeare's Globe

www.shakespearesglobe.com



Glossary of Elizabethan Terms

- Adieu** — farewell
An — if
Anon — soon, at once
Art — are
Aught — anything
Base — low, animal-like
Befall — happen, occur, take place
Counsel — advice
Coz — cousin, any close relative
Discourses — speaks
Dispatch — to send away or kill
Dost, doth — do, does
E'en — even, evenings
Ere — gladly, willingly
Foe — enemy
Good-den, do-den — good evening
Hap, haply — lucky, luckily
Hath, hast — has, have
Heavy — sad
Hie — go quickly
Hither — here
Ho — now
Humor — mood, frame of mind
Item — Latin likewise, used for lists
Knave — young boy, servant
Liege — king master, lord
Maid — an unmarried woman
Mark — pay attention to
Marry — indeed, of course
Meet — suitable, proper
Methinks — I think
Nay — no
N'er — never
Nought — nothing
Oft — often
Perchange — perhaps, maybe
Pray — beg
Prithee — please (I pray thee)
Quoth — Said
Resolve — plan
Sirrah — boy, usually of low rank
Soft — hush, wait a minute
Tarry — **wat, linger**
Tax — criticize, accuse
Thee, though — you
Thither — there
Thy — your
Tidings — news
'Tis — it is
Verily — truly
Wench — girl, your serving girl
Wherefore — why
Whither — where, to where
Will — desire
Withall - with, in addition, also
Wit — plan, imagination
Woe — misery
Wont — likely to, be accustomed to
Woo —to romance a person

Thee vs. Thou

	Subject	Object	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun
	You	You	Your	Yours
Singular	Thou	Thee	Thy	Thine
Plural	Ye	You	Yours	Yours