

SCENE *theatre*



AMANDA GRECO/The Observer

Dave Hartwig '00, performing a violent and vomit-filled death scene for Ophelia of "Hamlet." Hartwig plays the majority of the female characters in the show.

By CHRISTIE BOLSEN
Scene Theatre Critic

Any production of Shakespeare that features a PMSing, cross-dressing Juliet Capulet and a pot-smoking Hamlet deserves an hour and a half of time.

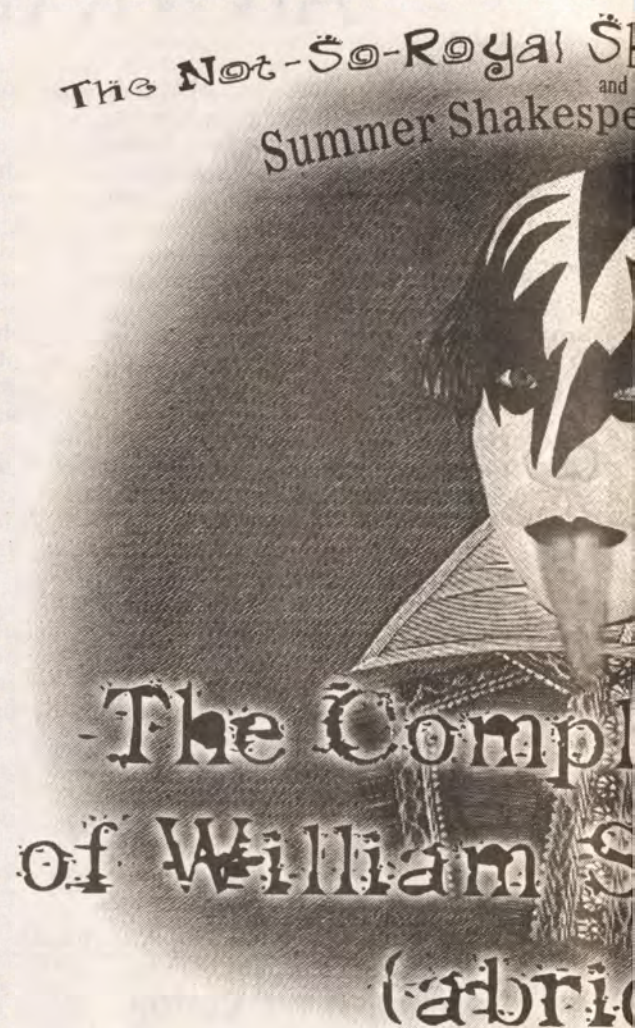
The Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company and Summer Shakespeare at Notre Dame's production of "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" is more abridged than complete. The show includes all 37 of Shakespeare's plays from comedies and tragedies to histories and honors his 154 sonnets on the space of a 3x5 index card.

The collaboration is the first the groups, though they would like the show to become an annual event to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday, which is April 23.

Four men play all the roles the plays require, including the female roles. The cast consists of sophomores C. Spencer Beggs, Dave "FD4" Lodewyck and Justin Williams as well as Dave "FD" Hartwig '00.

The first play the quad performs in abbreviation is "Romeo and Juliet," which sets the tone of the rest of the show with a swordfight between a frightening plastic sword and a menacing sock. Beggs' Romeo, who is even more effeminate than Leonardo DiCaprio was in the role, spends the rest of the scenes futilely pursuing Hartwig's homophobically resistant Juliet and rhapsodizing about love, sounding more reminiscent of the Ladies' Man than a typical Shakespearean leading man.

The next script to be condensed from its 400-year-old form is the Bard's first tragedy, "Titus Andronicus." To cater to the modern audience's interests, it has been



adapted into a cooking show. As hilarious as it is gruesome, especially Lavinia's lines which are spoken after her tongue has been chopped off, most of the characters in this scene are either missing body parts or about to be prepared into meals.

Next up is "Othello," performed by four incredibly white guys as a rap song, followed by all 16 of Shakespeare's comedies condensed into one short synopsis that combines random characters and events from each play interacting with the others.

Then comes the famously cursed Scottish play "Macbeth," acted out entirely with fantastic Scottish accents. Keeping with the rollicking fast pace, "Julius Caesar" quickly ensues, starring the title character with a fluffy, sparkly tiara and womanly mannerisms. The furious tempo of the production lends itself to the excessive murders that occur in quick succession. The actors are killed as their various characters up to eight times each.

The rest of the show includes an interpretive dance of "Troilus and Cressida" and all the histories played out as a football game, complete with passing of the crown and murder on the field. Finally, all the plays have either been performed or at least mentioned except "Hamlet."

At the mention of this play, David Hartwig, wearing a dress to portray most of the female characters, begins screaming and trying to slice his wrists with a toy sword. The intermission involves a hostage situation and attempted escape from the country. "Hamlet" then begins as Williams' Horatio and Lodewyck's Hamlet smoke weed and see apparitions.

The audience is involved in the "Get thee to a nunnery" scene, as Ophelia's psyche is performed according to the Freudian principles of Ego, Id and Superego.

"Hamlet" includes an excellent performance by two hand puppets talking seductively to one another before passionately making out and some of the best parody lines of the play during a swordfight that pays tribute to the filmmaking masterpiece "The Princess Bride."

"The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" was originally written by three disgruntled Gen-X actors from California: Jess Borgeson, Adam Long and Daniel Singer. It may be better to say



AMANDA GRECO/The Observer

Sophomore C. Spencer Beggs (right) as Bernardo salutes the king as Horatio, played by sophomore Justin Williams, surprises him on the night watch.

SCENE

theatre

Monday, April 22, 2002

page 13

Shakespeare Company
 Shakespeare at Notre Dame
 presents



Complete Works
 Shakespeare
 (abridged)

that the three wrote the standardized version of the show.

Borgeson, Long and Singer, who eventually became known as the Reduced Shakespeare Company, evolved the show from a half-hour parody of "Hamlet" that Singer had written in 1981 to the hour and a half "Complete Works," which was first presented in 1987 at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The show itself is a compilation of the Reduced Shakespeare Company's versions of the show.

The group performed the part improvised show all over the world. Since the production was different each time, the published script was what Borgeson, Long and Singer considered to be the best parts of their comedy. Arguably, reading the script is funnier than watching the show.

After years and years of reading Shakespeare, the authors decided to add a commentary to the lines through footnotes. The purported 11,188 footnotes in the show satirize annotated Shakespeare collections by giving irreverent scrutiny of the lines.

"Complete Works" is not necessarily performed as written. In fact, groups that perform the show are encouraged to customize the script to their audience.

The NSRSC adds a campus spin to many of the Bard's most famous lines with jabs at different majors and other Notre Dame jokes.

This is not the first time Notre Dame and a reduced Shakespeare have collided; the Department of Film, Television and Theatre produced "Complete Works" five years ago as a mainstage show. It was the last show to sell out at Washington Hall. The director of

this show, double-Domer Matt Holmes '99, actually performed in the last production of the show.

The group has only been rehearsing for two weeks and almost the entire cast has changed since the first rehearsal. While the limited rehearsal time shows in the lack of professional looking props, scenery or costumes, the unique type of show can get away with and even do well using plastic props and makeshift costumes.

Lodewyck joined a week ago, but remembered seeing the play performed when he was a sophomore in high school and Holmes was an actor, not the director.

"I was in the audience ... and it was the most fun I've ever had in theatre. When I visited my sister here and I saw this play, I thought, 'Wow, I don't really do plays, but I would love to do that one,'" Lodewyck said.

The appeal of this type of theatre is not in its elements of surprise. Although more humorous when the viewer is familiar with the Shakespeare play being parodied, the script is written so that no previous knowledge of the plays is necessary.

"We were talking to some of the actors about why people want to go to the theatre instead of a movie because in the movie you've got the element of surprise, you can go to a movie you've never seen before, but if you're going to see Shakespeare, chances are you know how it ends. Nobody's in the audience at "Romeo and Juliet" going, 'Oh God, I hope the young lovers make it this time.' This play kind of takes that whole gimmick and throws it in everybody's face, like we know you know how it's going to end

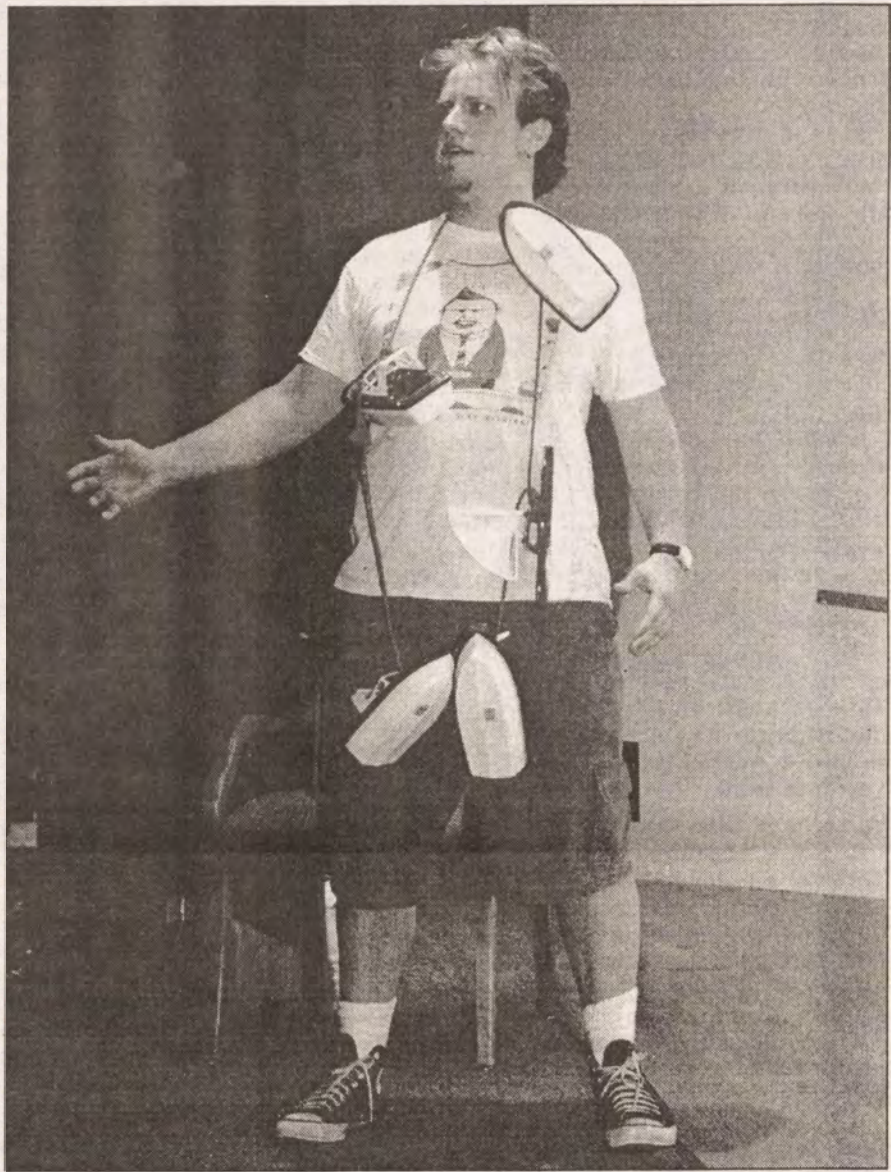
but we're just going to kind of mess with your head a little bit," Hartwig said.

While the atmosphere of the show may suggest those summertime street productions where the neighborhood punks would dress up and ridicule old people, the actors are talented comedic performers

who are lots more fun to watch than any professionally executed Shakespeare play. Bottom line: more entertaining than an Elizabethan seminar, but not for people who do not enjoy a lot of feigned vomiting sounds.

"The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" opens tomorrow night in the Hesburgh Center for International Studies auditorium. Performances run to Wednesday; all performances are at 7:30 p.m. General admission is \$10, \$5 for students. Tickets are available at the door or in advance at the LaFortune Student Center Box Office. To order tickets call (574) 631-8128. Children and those that are easily offended should be advised that this show contains mature content.

Contact Christie Bolsen at bolsen.1@nd.edu.



AMANDA GRECO/The Observer

Sophomore Dave Lodewyck as a pigmentally challenged Othello in a maritime rendition of Shakespeare's famous tragedy.



AMANDA GRECO/The Observer

Death, destruction and drag reign in the reduced version of Shakespeare's magnum opus "Hamlet."