BERNHARDT/HAMLET
BY THERESA REBECK
DIRECTED BY DONNA FEORE
THEATRE GOODMAN
Mark Twain, the great American humorist and author, once said, “There are five kinds of actresses: bad actresses, fair actresses, good actresses, great actresses – and then there is Sarah Bernhardt.”

Bernhardt, a French stage actress whose fans lovingly dubbed “Divine Sarah” for her lyrical voice, is recognized as the first international stage star. Notable for her acting style of gestures and poses, she starred in 70 roles and more than 125 productions across Europe, the US, Canada, South America, Australia, and the Middle East during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Her fame and infamy were due in no small part to her willingness to take dramatic risks most actresses would not dare. One of her most famous roles – and one of her greatest stage triumphs – was in the trouser role (in which an actress appears in male clothing) of the minstrel Zanetto in the one-act Le Passant (The Passerby), a role she played for the Emperor Napoleon III.

Although she had played male roles before, her daring was most exemplified by her decision to play one of the English language’s great tragic heroes, William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, in 1899.

Her performance was savaged in most of the press. Many – especially male – critics seemed incensed by the audaciousness of a woman taking on one of Shakespeare’s most iconic male characters. The English essayist Max Beerbohm was so offended that he went so far as to deny that women could even make art!

“Creative power,” he wrote, “the power to conceive ideas and execute them, is an attribute of virility; women are denied it, in so far as they practice art at all, they are aping virility, exceeding their natural sphere. Never does one understand so well the failure of women in art as when one sees them deliberately impersonating men upon the stage.”

That was sexist nonsense even in his time. Women had donned breeches and boots to play opera’s many trouser roles in music as far back as the 1600’s. Some of the greatest operatic composers wrote them into their compositions, from Handel and Mozart to Massenet and Offenbach.

Today, of course, we see more women playing roles created for or usually performed by men. Anna Faris gender-flipped a role originated by Kurt Russell in the 2018 remake of Overboard. Angelina Jolie took on the lead role in Salt; Tom Cruise had been offered the role first. Gwendoline Christie, probably best known to “Game of Thrones” fans as Brienne of Tarth, starred as the villain Captain Phasma in Star Wars: The Force Awakens. The role was originally conceived as a man. And of course Sigourney Weaver created the iconic character Ripley, a role written for a male actor, in the Alien movie franchise.

Theresa Rebeck’s Bernhardt/ Hamlet which opens our 2019-2020 season, imagines the great French actress grappling with the famous role. The production will leave you with questions about women and power, about the legacies of playwrights and actors, and, of course, about the literary and cultural legacy of Shakespeare. But these questions also apply to representation and agency, not just about women’s rights but the rights of actors of color, of actors with disabilities, to play roles of heroes and villains usually reserved for white able-bodied men. Can white actors play Troy Maxim in August Wilson’s Fences, and what do we learn about our history and ourselves when Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and Aaron Burr are played by actors of color?

These are questions I hope you will ponder, issues I hope you will discuss as we begin the 2019-2020 School Matinee Series season. In a season of plays about strong women - past and present, real and imagined - and at a time when we are again (or still?) wrestling with the dynamics of gender and race – this look at Sarah Bernhardt’s tenacity and determination is a very good place to start.
Hamlet sees his dead dad’s ghost, pretends to go crazy with revenge, actually goes crazy with revenge (debatable), and everyone dies.

Hamlet Summary
The ghost of the King of Denmark tells his son Hamlet to avenge his murder by killing the new king, Hamlet’s uncle. Hamlet feigns madness, contemplates life and death, and seeks revenge. His uncle, fearing for his life, also devises plots to kill Hamlet. The play ends with a duel, during which the King, Queen, Hamlet’s opponent and Hamlet himself are all killed.

Act I
Late at night, guards on the battlements of Denmark’s Elsinore castle are met by Horatio, Prince Hamlet’s friend from school. The guards describe a ghost they have seen that resembles Hamlet’s father, the recently-deceased king. At that moment, the Ghost reappears, and the guards and Horatio decide to tell Hamlet.

Claudius, Hamlet’s uncle, married Hamlet’s recently-widowed mother, becoming the new King of Denmark. Hamlet continues to mourn for his father’s death and laments his mother’s lack of loyalty. When Hamlet hears of the Ghost from Horatio, he wants to see it for himself.

Elsewhere, the royal attendant Polonius says farewell to his son Laertes,
who is departing for France. Laertes warns his sister, Ophelia, away from Hamlet and thinking too much of his attentions towards her. The Ghost appears to Hamlet, claiming indeed to be the ghost of his father. He tells Hamlet about how Claudius, the current King and Hamlet’s uncle, murdered him, and Hamlet swears vengeance for his father. Hamlet decides to feign madness while he tests the truth of the Ghost’s allegations (always a good idea in such situations).

Act II
According to his plan, Hamlet begins to act strangely. He rejects Ophelia, while Claudius and Polonius, the royal attendant, spy on him. They had hoped to find the reason for Hamlet’s sudden change in behaviour but could not. Claudius summons Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, old friends of Hamlet to find out what’s got into him. Their arrival coincides with a group of travelling actors that Hamlet happens to know well. Hamlet writes a play which includes scenes that mimic the murder of Hamlet’s father. During rehearsal, Hamlet and the actors plot to present Hamlet’s play before the King and Queen.

Act III
At the performance, Hamlet watches Claudius closely to see how he reacts. The play provokes Claudius, and he interrupts the action by storming out. He immediately resolves to send Hamlet away. Hamlet is summoned by his distressed mother, Gertrude, and on the way, he happens upon Claudius kneeling and attempting to pray. Hamlet reasons that to kill the King now would only send his soul to heaven rather than hell. Hamlet decides to spare his life for the time being.

Polonius hides in Gertrude’s room to protect her from her unpredictable son. When Hamlet arrives to scold his mother, her hears Polonius moving behind the arras (a kind of tapestry). He stabs the tapestry and, in so doing, kills Polonius. The ghost of Hamlet’s father reappears and warns his son not to delay revenge or upset his mother.

Act IV
Hamlet is sent to England, supposedly as an ambassador, just as King Fortinbras of Norway crosses Denmark with an army to attack Poland. During his journey, Hamlet discovers Claudius has a plan to have him killed once he arrives. He returns to Denmark alone, sending his companions Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths in his place.

Rejected by Hamlet, Ophelia is now desolate at the loss of her father. She goes mad and drowns.

Act V
On the way back to Denmark, Hamlet meets Horatio in the graveyard (along with a gravedigger), where they talk of the chances of life and death. Ophelia’s funeral procession arrives at the very same graveyard (what luck!). Hamlet confronts Laertes, Ophelia’s brother, who has taken his father’s place at the court.

A duel is arranged between Hamlet and Laertes. During the match, Claudius conspires with Laertes to kill Hamlet. They plan that Hamlet will die either on a poisoned rapier or with poisoned wine. The plans go awry when Gertrude unwittingly drinks from the poisoned cup and dies. Then both Laertes and Hamlet are wounded by the poisoned blade, and Laertes dies.

Hamlet, in his death throes, kills Claudius. Hamlet dies, leaving only his friend Horatio to explain the truth to the new king, Fortinbras, as he returns in victory from the Polish wars.

This summary has been reproduced in accordance with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust’s “Acceptable Use” policy, which allows reproduction when “strictly necessary for any personal or non-commercial educational use.” For more information, click here.
What Happens in *Cyrano De Bergerac*?
by LIAM COLLIER

*tldr: Cyrano de Bergerac, a brilliant poet and swordsman with an enormous nose, is too insecure to confess his love for Roxane; instead he agrees to help Christian, an attractive, but not particularly bright, young man serving in Cyrano’s regiment, to woo her. Roxane falls in love with Christian’s wit (AKA Cyrano), but Christian dies before he can tell her the truth. Eventually, on his deathbed, Cyrano confesses everything. (Too late, buddy.)*

First produced in 1897, Edmond Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* takes place in seventeenth century Paris, a romanticized era of art and literature in France.

**Act I**
At the top of the play, various courtiers, noblemen, and artists gather at the theatre to see the esteemed actor, Montfleuri. Rumor has it that Cyrano de Bergerac, a quick-witted nobleman with an uncharacteristically large nose, has threatened to shut down the performance if Montfleuri takes the stage. Unphased by these threats, Montfleuri attempts to perform only to be interrupted by Cyrano, who chases him from the theatre.

From the crowd of onlookers, Viscount de Valvert, a nobleman in the service of the powerful Count de Guiche, grows irritated by Cyrano’s arrogant behavior. Viscount fires off a ham-handed insult about Cyrano’s nose, which Cyrano meets with a barrage of witticisms. The exchange of words soon comes to blows; Cyrano duels and defeats Viscount (while simultaneously composing a sonnet).

Once the crowd departs, Cyrano confesses to his closest friend, Le Bret, that the real reason he shut down Montfleuri’s production is that he once saw the actor look lustfully towards Roxane, Cyrano’s distant cousin, whom Cyrano is hopelessly in love with. Le Bret encourages

*Jose Ferrer and Albert Cavens in “Cyrano” (1950).*
Cyrano to pursue her, but is interrupted by Lignière who arrives at the theatre to ask for Cyrano’s help. De Guiche has hired a hundred men to execute Lignière for singing a slanderous song about him. Cyrano rallies his regiment of swashbucklers, the Cadets of Gascony, and departs for battle.

**Act II**
The next day, Cyrano and his men celebrate their victory over De Guiche’s assassins at a local bakery owned by the poet Raganeau. While the men trade jokes, Cyrano puts the finishing touches on a beautifully composed letter confessing his love to Roxane; but when Roxane arrives and reveals that she is in love with Christian, an attractive, but not particularly bright, young member of the Gascony Cadets, Cyrano decides to keep the letter to himself.

Right on cue, Christian enters the bakery. Cyrano agrees to help him woo Roxane, and, without revealing his true feelings, has Christian sign the love letter himself.

**Act III**
After exchanging several more letters, Christian visits Roxane in person at her home. Without Cyrano’s wit to guide him, he is unable to impress her. Cyrano comes to the rescue, secretly whispering declarations of love for Christian to proclaim to Roxane as she stands on her balcony. Eventually, Cyrano obscures his face and delivers his poetry to Roxane directly.

The trio is interrupted by a friar bearing a message for Count De Guiche who has asked for Roxane’s hand in marriage. Roxane lies and tells the friar that De Guiche has given Roxane his blessing to marry Christian instead. When De Guiche finds out about the matrimony he orders Cyrano, Christian, and the rest of the Cadets of Gascony to the front lines of France’s war with Spain. Roxane makes Cyrano promise to protect Christian. Cyrano ensures Roxane that Christian will write to her every day.

**Act IV**
Months later, on the battlefield,
De Guiche and the Gascony Cadets are close to starving when Roxane arrives with a carriage full of food (generously donated by Raganeau). As the soldiers eat their first meal in weeks, Roxane tells Christian that she has fallen even more deeply in love with him after reading the many letters he sent to her from the war. These letters, of course, were actually written by Cyrano, who snuck through the Spanish lines twice a day to deliver them to her. When Roxane tells Christian that she would love him even if he were hideous, Christian finally accepts that she is truly in love with Cyrano. He urges Cyrano to tell her the truth, but before Cyrano can, De Guiche announces that the Spanish army is attacking.

Roxane refuses to leave the battlefield and ties her handkerchief around one the cadet’s spears to serve as a battleflag. The battle begins and Christian is immediately shot and killed by a Spanish soldier. As Roxane weeps over his body, she finds the final letter Cyrano wrote her. Cyrano realizes he cannot tarnish the image of Christian that Roxane has fallen in love with; and so, he remains silent.

**Act V**

Five years later, Roxane is still in mourning and living in a convent where Cyrano visits her every day. On the day of their final meeting, Cyrano arrives late bearing a fatal head wound; on his way to her, he was struck by a falling log, a shameful injury for a man who had always hoped to die in battle. Cyrano recites the contents of Christian’s final letter from memory, and Roxane realizes that Cyrano was the mind behind Christian’s wit all along. She kisses Cyrano as he dies in her arms.

Jennifer Garner and Kevin Kline in “Cyrano” on Broadway (2008).
(Why) Do We Care About *Hamlet*?
by LIAM COLLIER

Written between 1599 and 1602, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is over four hundred years old. Despite its age, Shakespeare’s longest play is still described by many as the greatest piece of literature ever set to paper. The four-hour epic is a mainstay on stages around the world and a staple of high school curriculums. So much so, that during the 2017-2018 school year, more high school seniors in the United States read *Hamlet* than any other piece of literature.\(^2\)

Why?

As institutions finally begin to confront the stranglehold that dead, white men have traditionally had on mainstream western culture,\(^3\) it’s worth asking if it is time to let *Hamlet* “shuffle off this mortal coil.”

As Cindy Tumiel noted in her 2013 article *Why Do We Still Care About Shakespeare*, the question of the playwright’s longevity is not a new one. The answer, particularly as its relates to the Prince of Denmark, usually lands in one of two camps: skeptics and romantics.

The former will often point to the play’s self-perpetuating fame. Packed with action, murder, and supernatural visitations, *Hamlet* was hugely successful among its Elizabethan audiences. From there, the play sustained itself for years on the backs of producers hungry for a hit and celebrities eager for their chance to play the coveted lead role. Spurred by the play’s popularity, literary critics dug into the text, which proved ripe for analysis, especially as scholars like Sigmund Freud began to consider character’s internal thoughts and motivations. Once firmly established on stage and in the academy, *Hamlet* trickled downward into classrooms around the country and outward into popular culture.

For those in this camp, *Hamlet* matters because our culture has decided that it matters. The play is adapted, referenced, and performed so often that it simply cannot be ignored.

Romantics argue that while *Hamlet*’s popularity may be self-perpetuating, there is still something truly special about Shakespeare’s work. The longevity of these plays, they assert, is proof of their enduring universality. Moreover, *Hamlet* represents an important turning point in the history of literature: a work of fiction that examined character’s interior thoughts and feelings in a manner unheard of at the time. While sixteenth century audiences may have flocked to the theatre for sword fights and ghosts, they stayed for *Hamlet*’s poetic articulation of his suffering, for the unrivaled beauty of Shakespeare’s prose and an exploration of human weakness unlike anything they had ever seen.

For the romantics, *Hamlet* matters because its themes – revenge, love, betrayal, mental illness, corruption, and death – are as timely now as they were when the play was first performed.

Still others will definitively answer the question “Why do we care about *Hamlet*?” with “We don’t,” or perhaps, “We shouldn’t.” Beauty, after all, is subjective, and prioritizing work that is historically popular leaves little room for new, diverse voices. These critics point out that the English canon is vast, and that while there is nothing inherently wrong with a play like *Hamlet*, the time has come to cede the stage to more relevant authors.

What kinds of literature would you like to read in your classroom?

What stories would you like to see on stage?

Is it time to move on from *Hamlet*?

---

1. American Theatre Magazine reports ninety professional productions of Shakespeare’s work in the United States during 18-19 season, making him the most produced Playwright in America. (In second place, Lucas Hnath with thirty-three professional productions.)


3. A Time Magazine analysis of 1 million syllabi used in college courses across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia found 20,124 syllabi featuring William Shakespeare. He is “followed by 16 other men, including Plato and Sigmund Freud, that precede the first female writer on the list.”
For years, critics have circled the same questions about *Hamlet*. Why does the eponymous Prince of Denmark take so long to avenge his father? Are the ghosts that haunt this play real or a figment of Hamlet’s imagination? And how do Ophelia and Gertrude feel about the dramatic events unfolding around them?

In *To Be or Not To Be*, writer Ryan North confronts these questions head on by adapting *Hamlet* into an irreverent “chooseable path adventure.” Existing somewhere between a young adult novel and a point-and-click video game, *To Be or Not to Be* highlights the many aspects of Shakespeare’s text that have aged poorly and the abundant absurdities of Shakespeare’s most famous “tragedy.”
What a Piece of Work is *Hamlet: Bernhardt/Hamlet’s Plays in Pop Culture*  
by DANA MUNRO

As the name suggests, *Bernhardt/Hamlet* centers around a production of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In the play, Sarah Bernhardt determines that the original script of *Hamlet* is too wordy and unintelligible and asks her colleague and lover Edmond Rostand to simplify the script.

Rostand is horrified at the idea of tampering with the words of the Bard, but he resolves to do it for Sarah. And he wasn’t alone: since 1899, *Hamlet* has been adapted endless times. The story has influenced countless songs, movies, and plays.

One of the most notable adaptations of *Hamlet* is *The Lion King*. *The Lion King* centers around a young prince, Simba, who is next in line for the throne just like Hamlet. Both *Hamlet* and *The Lion King* feature murderous, power-hungry uncles — Uncle Scar and Uncle Claudius. The young princes are both haunted by images of their dead fathers and are both exiled from their homes. And, both antagonists, Scar and Claudius, have evil henchmen (the hyenas for Scar, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for Claudius). Simba and Hamlet confront their uncles and, in the end, their uncles are killed.

There is controversy over exactly what aspects of *Hamlet* Disney borrowed. Some say Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Timon and Pumba, some say they are the hyenas. There is debate over whether Nala is based on Ophelia or not. Whatever elements of the *Hamlet* storyline Disney borrowed, it is widely agreed that *The Lion King* is an adaptation of *Hamlet*.

Other works of art have even directly quoted famous lines from *Hamlet*. *Hair*, the 1967, musical about hippie culture in New York features a song titled “What a Piece of Work is Man,” the first line of one of Hamlet’s most notable speeches in which he wonders at the marvels of humanity but is troubled by the insignificance of humans in the world. The students in *Hair* go through a similar thought process. They agree that man is capable of incredible feats but wonder why we put such amazing creatures through such tortuous experiences like the Vietnam War. They wonder why innocent men need to die, as does Hamlet when Claudius murders his father.

The “What a Piece of Work is Man” monologue is also featured in many other scripts such as the animated horror film *Coraline*, the thriller/romance movie *Grosse Pointe Blank*, and the Civil War movie *Gettysburg*.

Other music influenced by *Hamlet* includes Elton John’s “The King Must Die”.

Other pieces of pop culture reference *Hamlet’s* characters. *The Simpsons* included over 20 Shakespeare-related episodes, one that is heavily inspired by *Hamlet*. In the episode, Bart depicts Hamlet, Lisa depicts Hamlet’s love interest Ophelia, and Moe the bartender depicts Uncle Claudius.

*Hamlet* is not the only famous play featured in *Bernhardt/Hamlet*. As the company struggles with the Hamlet text, Rostand brings forth a new play: *Cyrano de Bergerac*. *Cyrano de Bergerac* is the story of an eloquent young man named Cyrano who loves a woman out of his league. He decides to be with her vicariously through helping an attractive but dim friend win her over. Since Bernhardt’s colleague, Edmond Rostand, wrote the original *Cyrano de Bergerac* there have been many adaptations.

The 1987 film *Roxanne* with Steve Martin follows the exact plot. Steve Martin’s character C.D. (familiar initials?) has an enormous nose, falls in love with Roxanne and resolves to write letters to her from...
an attractive lightweight who likes her named Chris. The plot takes place in the 80s and the movie is set in a small ski town in Washington, but it maintains the same plot points and essence as the original story.

Other movies that have borrowed from the Cyrano storyline include Hitch, The Truth About Cats and Dogs, and The Ugly Truth.

Hitch centers around a “date doctor” who trains bland men to woo beautiful women similarly to how Cyrano trains Christian. The Truth About Cats and Dogs is about a woman teaching her friend how win over a man, again like Cyrano and Christian. The Ugly Truth is about a television producer who struggles talking to men. The network’s relationship expert helps her talk to the man she likes by putting an earpiece in her ear and speaking to her the words she should say to attract him. This earpiece bit has become a very common adaptation of Cyrano in pop culture, as has the concept of friends helping each other woo the person of their dreams.

The stories of Hamlet and Cyrano have influenced so many artists since their creation, and have staying power in our culture. They are relatable. We all want to achieve our destinies and must grapple with moral crossroads sometimes in order to do so. Sometimes we have a crush on someone out of our league and worry they would never accept us as we are. These stories make us believe we aren’t alone in our journeys. They have woven their way into the cultural fabric of the world since they were written and will forever live on in the stories they’ve inspired.
Bernhardt/Hamlet centers around actors, rehearsals, plays and playwrights. So, naturally, there’s a lot of inside baseball being played: characters casually referencing plays and characters that aren’t as relevant to the plot as the titular Hamlet. To get the full scoop, here’s a breakdown of all of the other plays mentioned.

La Dame Aux Camélias
“Can’t she keep playing Camille? She dies so beautifully.”
- Louis, Act 1, Scene 3

Written and adapted for the stage by Alexandre Dumas (best known for his novel The Three Musketeers), La Dame Aux Camélias is referenced multiple times in Bernhardt/Hamlet by characters praising Sarah Bernhardt’s death as the lead, Marguerite Gautier, who would later (and in American versions) become known as Camille. Based on the real-life Marie Duplessis, a courtesan Dumas had an affair with, La Dame Aux Camélias tells the story of a young gentleman, Armand Duval, who falls in love with a courtesan and eventually convinces her to run away with him to start a new life. Through a series of miscommunications and anxiety about scandal, Marguerite/Camille eventually leaves a heartbroken Armand, and then dies (“beautifully”) of consumption. This plot might sound familiar to you: it was later adapted into the Verdi opera, La Traviata, and was the basis for Baz Luhrmann’s movie, Moulin Rouge!

Lorenzaccio
“Lorenzo Di Medici was no fop. At least not the way you played him.” - Alphonse, Act 1 Scene 4

Written by Alfred de Musset in 1834, Lorenzaccio (which was inspired by Hamlet) is another play in which Sarah Bernhardt played the male lead, Lorenzo Di Medici. The play follows three attempts to
murder and unseat the Duke of Medici, Alessandro. One attempt is led by Cardinal Cibi, who believes unseating the duke will eventually lead to him becoming the pope. Another is lead by the Strozzi family, interested in Florence becoming a republic with no monarch. The final (and ultimately successful) plot is lead by Lorenzo Di Medici (also called Lorenzaccio), the duke’s cousin, who wants him out of the picture for “personal reasons,” and goes out of his way to become Alessandro’s closest confidante as a means to an end. Lorenzo kills the duke, but is then himself assassinated and -- at a pivotal moment when Florence could become a republic -- it doesn’t at all, and there is a new duke put in power by the cardinal. Notably, the play is so long, and has so many characters and settings that it was never performed during Musset’s lifetime. Ultimately, it is unclear if Lorenzo was, as Alphonse says, a fop.

La Samaritaine
“La Samaritaine was a tremendous success,” - Alphonse, Act 1, Scene 4
A play in three tableaus by Edmond Rostand, La Samaritaine (1897) is the biblical story of Photine, Samaritan woman converted by Jesus at Jacob’s well. In the first tableau, Photine (originally portrayed by Sarah Bernhardt), encounters Jesus and decides to reject her life of self indulgence in exchange for the love of God. In the second, Photine convinces the nearby townspeople to return to the well with her to hear the teachings of Jesus. In the final tableau, the townspeople accompany Photine back to the well singing psalms to become followers of Jesus.

Medea
“Oh well yes Medea. But she makes my point for me! She didn’t want to kill her own children. She was furious with Jason. Women. All we ever get to do is sit around and mope for love. The power eludes us.” Sarah, Act 1 Scene 4
A classic greek tragedy by Euripides, Medea follows its title character as she seeks revenge against her husband, Jason, who has decided to abandon her to marry Glauce, a princess and the daughter of the king, Creon. Jason attempts to justify his position, saying he can’t pass up marrying into royalty, and promises to keep Medea (whom he calls a barbarian woman) as his mistress. Suspiciously, he also promises to continue to provide for their children, even if she is banished from the kingdom. After spending the first half of the play in conflict, Medea pretends to apologize for her rage by giving Jason a set of poisoned robes for his soon-to-be wife. Glauce wears the robes and dies a painful death alongside her father, who comes into contact with the robes while trying to revive her. Rushing to confront Medea, Jason discovers that she has also murdered their children. She escapes to Athens with their children’s bodies, abandoning him forever.

King Lear
“Your Ophelia was divine. And your Cordelia.”- Act 2, Scene 3
King Lear, one of Shakespeare’s later tragedies, follows an elderly king who has decided to divide his kingdom between his three daughters, giving the largest portion to the daughter who professes the most love for him. Goneril and Regan, two of his daughters, play his game and flatter their father unconditionally. Their younger sister, Cordelia, refuses to participate, simply stating she loves her father as a daughter should. She is disowned and the kingdom given to her sisters, who soon turn to plot on each other and their father. Turned away and humiliated by both Goneril and Regan in turn, Lear begins to realize the flaw in his plan. Soon, Goneril and Regan hear the news that Cordelia, having accepted a marriage proposal from the King of France, has readied troops to march against her sisters and reclaim her father’s land. They battle, and defeat Cordelia, sentencing her to death. Suspicious of their whole family, the sisters then begin to doubt each other, leading Goneril to poison her sister and eventually kill herself. Finally, Lear dies over the grief of losing all of his daughters.
Macbeth
“A woman with power is a freak. A freak of nature, perhaps, but a freak nonetheless. Shakespeare himself acknowledged it. “Unsex me here” is one of his mightiest condemnations. A woman reaching for power? It’s unholy.” - Louis, Act 2 Scene 3
Macbeth, sometimes referred to as The Scottish Play, is another of Shakespeare’s tragedies, sometimes considered to be cursed because of its bloody plotline. In Bernhardt/Hamlet, Louis references one of Lady Macbeth’s speeches, as she prepares to convince her husband he should murder the king -- the first in a line of many people Macbeth will eventually murder to take power and keep control of it. Macbeth does kill the king, partially inspired by a prophecy given to him by three witches. He then spends the rest of the play dealing with the ramifications of power, violence and guilt, as he tries to outrun suspicion and more prophecies. The play is a tragedy, so it doesn’t end well for anyone.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream
“Titania is humiliated, bedded by an ass, for exerting her power.” - Louis, Act 2, Scene 3
One of Shakespeare’s comedies, A Midsummer Night’s Dream follows a pair of lovers (Lysander and Hermia) who run away together into the forest on a (surprise!) midsummer night. They are followed by Demetrius (who is in love with Hermia, and supposed to marry her), and Helena (who is in love with Demetrius, and also Hermia’s best friend). The four are spotted by Oberon, the king of the fairies, who has his sidekick Puck use the essence of a magical flower to royally screw things up -- the flower makes whoever has fallen victim to it fall in love with the next person they see, resulting in both Lysander and Demetrius falling in love with Helena. Puck also uses the flower on Titania, the queen of the fairies, who he’s feuding with, and she awakes to fall in love with Bottom, an idiot actor who has recently been turned into a donkey by the fairies. Eventually, the fairies right all of their mischief: Oberon and Titania make up, Lysander and Hermia get married, and Demetrius (still affected by the flower?) and Helena get married.

L’Aiglon
“L’Aiglon. It is about the son of Bonaparte. Napoleon the second, the eaglet they called him. Raised in captivity after his father was captured and the empire fell.” - Maurice, Act 2 Scene 6
L’Aiglon, written in 1900 by Edmond Rostand, tells the story of Napoleon Bonaparte’s son, both grieving the loss of his father and desperate to live up to him. Literally translating to the boy’s nickname (“The Eaglet”), the action of the play follows his desire to be emperor, his conflicted Austrian and French identity, and his early death due to tuberculosis.
A trend is popping up in the English-speaking theatre world. In plays and musicals which originally featured men and straight couples, producers are choosing to cast women in the men’s roles and men in the women’s. Last year, a production of Oklahoma! at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival presented the central romance, originally between farm girl Laurey Williams and cowboy Curly McClain, as a romance between farm girl and cowgirl. Actress Tatiana Wechsler played the famous cowboy and many other performers took on roles originally written for genders other than their own. Right now, 5000 miles from Oregon, Rosalie Craig is doing the same as Bobby (now Bobbie) in a production of Company on London’s West End. These choices are receiving extensive coverage from critics, as if gender swapped casting were a new phenomenon. But men have been playing women (and women have been playing men) for hundreds of years in the English-speaking theatre. So what’s all the fuss about? Why would you choose to cast women in roles written for men? And what have critics thought about these casting choices over the past 100 years?

I see four main reasons why plays use gender-swapped casting: tradition, social commentary, camp, and misguidance.

Tradition

If I were to tell you a woman, Maude Adams, famously played a male role in a children’s play on Broadway in 1905, you’d probably imagine it was a big deal: protesters in the streets, boycotts, passionate speeches about the moral fabric of society. In the very least, you’d think, the New York Times would mention the gender swapping in their review. And yet, in its November 7, 1905 review, the Times makes no mention of Adams’ gender swap:

And in the person of Maude Adams, so delicately suited to the child-lore of which the story is a part, Peter Pan is a joy to meet [...] True to the fairy idea, true to the child nature, lovely, sweet, and wholesome. She combines all the delicate sprightliness and the gentle, wistful pathos necessary to the role, and she is supremely in touch with the spirit of it all. It was a night of triumph for Maude Adams.

Just six years before, a London reviewer wrote of Sarah Bernhardt’s turn as Hamlet, “A woman is positively no more capable of beating out the music of Hamlet than is a man of expressing the plaintive and half-accomplished surrender of Ophelia.” What gives? What gave Maude permission to embody Pan but not Bernhardt to play Hamlet? At least in part, it was tradition. J.M. Barrie wrote the role for a woman. From Maude Adams to Mary Martin to Cathy Rigby, women get to play Peter Pan. It’s not a political statement or a queer reading, or a trendy stylistic choice, it’s just the way it’s done.

Why “Swapped”? 

The term “swap” can imply two things being switched. This doesn’t really match up with the way we, today, understand gender to be far more than just two things. So, when I say “swapped” I mean one thing being switched out for one of any number of other things. Thus, while it isn’t a perfect term, “gender swapping” is anytime an actor’s gender and their character’s gender do not match.

Sometimes terms like “genderbent,” “gender blind,” “genderqueer” “crossdressed,” or “drag” are used to describe this kind of casting. These terms all mean slightly different things and all of them are problematic in their own special ways. For our purposes, “gender swapped” will cover all of these variations.
12-to-21-year-old boys playing all of the women characters.

Gender swapped casting was so central to his plays, it actually changed the way Shakespeare wrote. “Shakespearean performance is an arena for exploring desire, sexuality and gender roles and for challenging audience expectations,” writes Clare McManus, a Professor of Early Modern Literature and Theatre at the University of Roehampton, “the playful exploration of gender was written into these plays from the start.” Thus, as McManus points out, when Orsino in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night gazes at Viola—a woman, played by a man, in disguise as her twin brother—and says,

\begin{quote}
they shall yet belie thy happy years, 
That say thou art a man. Diana’s lip 
Is not more smooth and rubious;  
thy small pipe  
Is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound,  
And all is semblative a woman’s part.  
\end{quote}

(1.4.30–34)

It’s a joke! One the audience would get. They’d be watching a teenage boy, pretending to be a woman, dressed like a man, falling in love with a very confused duke. Shakespeare wasn’t trying to hide the fact that his plays featured gender swapping. He was playing it up.

Traditional gender swapping continues to this day. In 2002 Mark Rylance (from Dunkirk and Ready Player One) played Olivia and Eddie Redmayne (from Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them) played Viola in an all-male production of Twelfth Night at Shakespeare’s Globe. In 2013 the production was performed again on Broadway and this time, the New York Times definitely noticed the swap. In a glowing review entitled “Boys Will Be Boys (and Sometimes Girls)” the critic highlights that Shakespeare wrote with cross-dressing in mind. “This is how Shakespeare was meant to be done” writes the critic. From Twelfth Night to Peter Pan, traditional gender swapping, although deliberate, raises few eyebrows and frequently garners critical praise.

Social Commentary
In the fall of 2013, as the all-male Twelfth Night ran on Broadway, another Shakespeare opened across the east river in Brooklyn: Julius Caesar cast entirely with women. The director, Phyllida Lloyd staged the piece as if inmates at a women’s prison were performing Shakespeare’s text. She described this choice as “entirely feminist” and hoped the production would “make young women in the audience feel they are potentially part of not just the
romantic and the domestic, but that they could be at the center of the political sphere.” For many women in the cast, this choice reinvigorated their desire to perform Shakespeare, echoing the sentiments of Sarah Bernhardt over 100 years prior. “I’d reached a point where I didn’t think I’d play Shakespeare any longer,” said Harriet Walter, who played Brutus, “Once I’d played Cleopatra, I thought, ‘Now what can I do?’ Because any other female role I was offered in the Shakespeare canon was going to be inferior and less demanding.” Both by presenting women in roles of political power and by casting women in challenging roles, the production used gender swapping to highlight social inequity.

Critics, however, were not nearly as taken by this concept. In a review of the London production, one critic wrote: “It is an absurd contrivance which serves only to demonstrate quite how imprisoned the director is by a patently daft idea, if not also her political correctness and vanity.” He gave the production one star.

Phyllida Lloyd’s Julius Caesar was not the first play to be lambasted by critics for gender-swapping. In 1981, Caryl Churchill’s Cloud Nine received a similar, if slightly less scathing, treatment from critics in New York. Cloud Nine’s first act is about a British family living in colonial Africa. The second act is about the same family, now living during the “free love” movement of the 1970s in London. In the first act, the role of the mother is played by a man and the role of the son is played by a woman. In the second act, the two actors switch roles, yet a new character, a little girl named Cathy, is played by a man. Both the gender and role swapping are meant to illustrate Churchill’s thoughts about the two eras: Victorian standards were strict and limiting. Seeing a man forced into a corset and a little boy, played by a woman, forced to play with guns when he’d rather play with dolls illustrates her point. By having the actors switch parts, yet still having Cathy played by a man, Churchill is able to demonstrate that although sexual politics changed greatly over 100 years, the roles were just as limiting and confusing.

Today, the play is taught in playwriting classes around the world and is broadly thought to be ahead of its time. But when it premiered on Broadway in 1981, one critic dismissed the gender swapping as “showy sex changes” writing, “the transsexual casting is also problematic: though the male and female impersonations are amusing [...] they nonetheless serve the unwanted function of [spoiling] the jokes.” The critic felt that the socially-conscious gender swapping got in the way of the storytelling. He missed the point: the genderswapped casting is the storytelling. In both Julius Caesar and Cloud Nine, we see that socially-conscious gender swapped casting—especially when it has a feminist perspective—has far more merit than critics give it credit for.

Camp
Defining “camp” is a project we don’t have time for here. Photographer and artist Susan Sontag describes camp as “love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration.” This makes it a perfect stage for gender swapped casting.

In 1988, legendary queer film director John Waters released the film Hairspray about the integration of an all-white dance TV show in the 1960s. To play the role of Edna, a repressed housewife and laundress, he cast

Shakespeare in Prisons
It’s worth mentioning that gender swapping is necessary when Shakespeare is performed in prisons. Whereas Phylia Lloyd’s Caesar used professional actors in a production set in a fictional prison, groups like “Shakespeare Behind Bars” organize productions of Shakespeare’s plays in actual prisons, with inmates making up the cast and crew. “Shakespeare Behind Bars” reports recidivism rates (the percentage of folks released from prison who are convicted of new crimes) among their actors are as low as 6%. The national average is 76.6%.
Divine, a famous drag queen. So when the film was adapted into a musical in 2002, the creators chose to cast the role of Edna with a male actor. Since then, Edna has been played nearly exclusively by men, including John Travolta in the 2008 film. In the review of the original Broadway show, a critic wrote, “[Edna] is not just a cross-dressing sight gag. She’s every forgotten housewife, recreated in monumental proportions and waiting for something to tap her hidden magnificence.” In this case, campy gender swapping meant casting trained drag queens (or John Travolta) to play genuinely emotional, if a bit exaggerated, women characters.

Sometimes a man with no experience as a drag queen may take on a role originally written for a woman. In The Importance of Being Earnest, a famous victorian comedy by queer playwright Oscar Wilde, there is a character named Lady Bracknell (if you watch Game of Thrones, she clearly inspired the character Lady Olenna). The role is so devastatingly fabulous that it’s been played by many amazing women and some incredible men. In 2012, Brian Bedford (the voice of Robin in Disney’s Robin Hood) played Bracknell on Broadway to great acclaim with one critic writing, “Within seconds of sweeping onstage, and with a wordless gesture as funny as it is subtle, the great actor Brian Bedford proves beyond question that gender is of no importance whatsoever in portraying the imposing Lady Bracknell...” From Oscar Wilde to John Waters, campy gender swapping is an important theatrical tradition which contemporary critics usually appreciate.

MISGUIDED
I’m using the term “misguided gender swapping” to describe when a cis actor plays a trans character. Most would not consider this type of casting gender swapping, and that’s precisely what makes it so harmful.

Hedwig and the Angry Inch is a musical from 1998 by John Cameron Mitchell and Steven Trask. When it opened, Mitchell also played the leading role: Hedwig, a trans musician from East Berlin (the formerly communist half of the city). Although Mitchell is queer, he is not trans, yet both he and his replacement in the part, Michael Cerveris, received rave reviews when the musical first ran Off Broadway in the 1990s. In 2014, the musical premiered on Broadway. At the time, major trans stars like Laverne Cox (who played Sophia on Orange is the New Black) were greatly increasing trans visibility in the United States.
Yet producers chose Neil Patrick Harris to play Hedwig on Broadway and critics lauded his performance, as they had Mitchell’s and Cerveris’ a decade and a half earlier.

To make matters more complicated, there is another gender swapped role in Hedwig: Yitzhak. The character Yitzhak is a cis man who performs as a drag queen, yet he is usually played by a woman. The writers make a similar choice to Shakespeare in Twelfth Night, but in reverse: a woman, playing a man, playing a woman. This is certainly not an instance of misguided casting and it highlights the complicated nature of critiquing representations like these.

Hedwig’s creators are not ignorant. I imagine they intended to further representations of trans folks in theatre. Yet by choosing to cast cis men in the role of a trans woman, they not only deny opportunity to worthy trans actors, but imply that the difference between a cis man and a trans woman is so negligible that their bodies are interchangeable.

In 2006 the musical Priscilla, Queen of the Desert premiered in Australia. It tells the story of two drag queens and one trans woman, Bernadette, on a road trip through the outback. The musical went on to play in New York, London, Toronto, São Paulo, Stockholm, Athens, Manila, Singapore, Seoul, Auckland, and Tokyo. But it wasn’t until Pride Films and Plays produced the musical in Chicago, in 2017 that a trans actress (and Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame inductee), Honey West, played Bernadette. She received glowing reviews. The Chicago Tribune wrote, “And, thank heavens for all in attendance, the redoubtable Honey West is on hand as tour guide through a decade some would rather forget. [...] West is a delight all night.” The choice to avoid gender swapping and instead cast a local, trans star in a trans role paid off: The show was recommended by every major critic in Chicago.

Gender swapped casting isn’t all good or all bad. Sometimes it’s a feminist or societal critique, sometimes it’s a 400-year-old tradition, sometimes it’s fun, sometimes it’s boring. While critics are slower to recognize the merits of politically motivated gender swapped casting, they tend to appreciate the traditional and campy varieties. They unfortunately also usually praise the choice to put cis actors in trans roles. Regardless of the reviews, gender swapping remains an important tool for every theatre artist. It’s up to the
Breaching Gender Roles: a History of Breeches Performance
by LIBBY TOFIG

The history of Western theatre is governed by cross-gender performance. Up until the mid-17th century, adolescent men portrayed the classical canon’s most famous ingenues. It was not until the 1660 decree by King Charles II that women were legally allowed to perform onstage. With this new freedom, women of the Restoration wasted no time in making their way onto major stages all across Europe. Actresses like Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis garnered tremendous success, not only for their performances as the great heroines of the day, but for playing a variety of roles. By the late 18th century, the theatre saw a remarkable increase in breeches roles, ranging anywhere from the Fool in King Lear to Romeo in Romeo and Juliet. Over 200 years after Nell Gwyn’s famed breeches performance in The Maiden Queen, Sarah Bernhardt made the widely controversial decision to play the titular role in Shakespeare’s Hamlet.

Breaching Tradition
While the first generation of actresses were no strangers to breeches roles, their performance consisted largely of the “woman in disguise” narrative. The latter half of the 18th century saw a new trend in male impersonation. The breeches genre slowly expanded into some of Shakespeare’s more acceptably “effeminate” men, including adolescents and fools. Even the most modest actresses of the day participated in the movement. In 1802, beloved actress Sarah Siddons donned breeches to play that pesky Prince of Denmark. Siddons played Hamlet nine times over the course of her thirty year career. Siddons’ performance was far more modest than the other famous Sarah who would perform Hamlet a near 100 years in the future. Her garments were designed to preserve her modesty, challenging male critics to see her beyond a sexual object. Siddons’ Hamlet was reasonably successful in Dublin, but this kind of cross-gender performance did not reach a wider audience until the mid-19th century.

The turn of the century ushered in a new era of breeches performers. Victorian burlesque emerged showcasing women in breeches. Breeches roles became so fashionable that new plays were produced with the explicit intention of male impersonation. Siddons’ precedent opened the door for other women to take on Shakespeare’s most coveted roles. Charlotte Cushman was critically acclaimed for her portrayals of men onstage, most notably for the role of Romeo in Romeo and Juliet at Haymarket Theatre in 1845. Cushman’s masculine appearance and athleticism wowed audiences and freed her from the sexual exploitation faced by many of her contemporaries. Critics raved over Cushman’s stunning performance. A reviewer for the Times of London wrote, “It is enough to say that the Romeo of Miss Cushman is far superior to any Romeo we have ever had.” Even Queen Victoria remarked that she could not believe Cushman was a woman. Cushman later went on to portray other notable male characters including Lear, Shylock, and Hamlet.

Before the Divine Sarah could take the stage, Alice Marriott, or “Ms. Marriott,” performed all over Europe and the United States in her 1859 touring production of Hamlet. Ms.

What’s With the Breeches?
The term “Breeches Role” is derived from the scandalous decision to dress women in breeches while portraying men. Breeches roles were initially popularized by characters like Portia from Merchant of Venice and Viola from Twelfth Night, which enabled women to expose their calves in trousers without losing their femininity. Breeches performance was not born out of the impulse to challenge gender binaries, but rather to objectify actresses and pander to male consumption. In fact, breeches roles were more of a derivative of burlesque performance than any traditional theatre practice.
Marriott was considered the “famous tragedienne” of her era, portraying all kinds of melodramatic heroines and Shakespearean leading ladies before crossing over into the breeches genre. Marriott was fully committed to her costuming, donning a doublet and hose for her breeches roles. Much like Cushman, Marriott was widely regarded for her vast repertoire of breeches parts, such as Romeo, Young Norval, and Richard III. However, no role mobilized theatregoers quite like Marriott’s Hamlet. While some reviewers found Cushman and Marriott’s efforts to “trespass against good taste,” most reviewers took them quite seriously and lauded the actresses’ versatility. One emphatic audience member stated in an open response to Marriott’s Hamlet:

Sir,—Seeing your flattering notice of the performance, I was induced to go and see for myself whether you had overpraised her or not. I have seen all the great actors since Kemble’s time in the part,—the most difficult one in the whole range of Shakespeare’s characters. None of them satisfied me. The one who pleased me the best was George Vandenhoff. As regards Miss Marriott’s portrayal of the young prince, I would almost be induced to say it was PERFECT.

Even those who frowned upon her decision to take on the role of Hamlet respected Marriott’s artistic integrity and approached their reviews with total seriousness. It took women like Marriott breaking new ground in the breeches performance that enabled Bernhardt the platform to present her version of the infamous Prince of Denmark.

**Beyond Bernhardt: Breeches Roles in Contemporary Theatre**

As theatrical narratives have offered more space for complex womxn-identifying characters, and our understanding of gender has become more comprehensive, the breeches genre has become less fashionable. However, gender-swapping classical theatre has become more and more common. Some of the world’s finest actors, including Helen Mirren, Glenda Jackson, and Fiona Shaw, have taken on Shakespeare’s greatest male characters. However, the question remains as to whether or not it is more effective to follow in the tradition of the breeches genre, or if it is more effective to adapt pronouns and gender presentation of these characters to reflect the actor. To learn more about “Gender-Swapping,” read the article on page 15.

**Into the Breaches with Sarah Bernhardt**

Between the years of 1869 and 1900, Sarah Bernhardt was said to have played 18 breeches roles, including her notable performances in Lorenzaccio and Hamlet. As Bernhardt entered her fifties, she was less satisfied with the delicate heroines of her past and was prepared to conquer some of the western theatre’s most sacred male characters. Following the long lineage of
breeches performers before her, it was not just the breeches that made Bernhardt’s *Hamlet* controversial. Rather, in a time when men were favored over women, and young women over old, it was her cross-age performance that really challenged theatrical tradition. Bernhardt defied preconceptions of the aging female body and stunned audiences with her vitality and transformative physicality as *Hamlet*. She argued that her womanliness was what made her most qualified to take on the role, as a mature man cannot play a boy and “a boy of twenty cannot understand the philosophy of *Hamlet.*” Following her run in *Hamlet*, Bernhardt assumed the role of the Duke of Reichstadt, Napoleon’s tragic son, in Edmond Rostand’s *L’Aiglon*. *L’Aiglon* was arguably Bernhardt’s most memorable breeches performance, tailor made by Edmund Rostand to showcase all of her greatest strengths. Audiences were amazed by Bernhardt’s capacity to “overcome her advancing years” and “embody the boy” so completely. *L’Aiglon* is immortalized in Bernhardt’s obituary, cited as her “most famous role of all” by the New York Times.

Scholars still argue if the legacy of breeches roles is a positive one. On one hand, the genre was formed to pander to the sexual fantasies of male patrons. Conversely, breeches parts offered actresses the opportunity to take on roles past the lilting ingenues they built their careers on. Bernhardt formally denied any effort to draw attention to the artificiality of gender binaries through her performance. Do her comments negate her influence in redefining the way gender functions in the theatre? As our vocabulary on gender broadens, more conversations have and will continue to take place about the way we navigate gender on the stage.

**Beyond Theatre: Women as *Hamlet* in Film**

By Julie Massey

Sometimes, as in 1921 and 2000, the conceit of having an actress play *Hamlet* has been used to explore the horror, confusion and political upheaval that occurs during and after wartime from a fresh perspective. In 1921, Danish actress Asta Nielsen played *Hamlet* as a woman raised from birth as prince in the only full-length silent film version of the play. Shot in Germany following World War I, the film’s dark, angular style, coupled with Nielsen’s severe and fragile appearance (once compared to “a white passion flower on a black stalk”) magnified the illusion of *Hamlet* being trapped in a cold, lifeless room as political forces beyond the character’s control destroy a civilization in which rules no longer exist. Eighty years later, in 2000, German actress Angela Winkler played *Hamlet* in a critically acclaimed stage production of the play set in the aftermath of political strife in Eastern Europe and war in the Balkans. The fact that Winkler’s own father had been killed in World War II enabled the actress to access the sort of raw emotions that were necessary for her to play *Hamlet* as someone lost and deeply scarred by a world gone mad – bedraggled and vulnerable, but also determined to hang on for dear life.
Bernhardt/Hamlet is rife with examples of art centered around Sarah Bernhardt. Through Theresa Rebeck’s lens, the two artforms that inform Bernhardt’s story most are the roles she has performed in the past, and Alphonse Mucha’s corresponding posters. And yet, despite a central focus on the actress herself, these roles and the iconography crafted around them define Sarah more than she defines them. She is regarded as “a painting come alive” – a two-dimmensional, man-made piece of art rather than an actress, or dare I say, a human being. The objectification of the Divine Sarah gives insight into some of the most prevalent themes attached to women in classical art, themes that she tries to escape by playing Hamlet. And so, much like the play itself, this article will use the association of Sarah and the women she so deftly captured to investigate the classically accepted roles for women in art.

“She is so graceful, at peace. Angelic even.”

Alphonse Mucha, a Czech painter well-known for his Art Nouveau style, lent his talents for posters of Sarah Bernhardt’s shows throughout her career. Within the context of Bernhardt/Hamlet, he often provides commentary on these advertisements. In regard to his illustration for La Samaritaine by Edmond Rostand, Mucha delighted in Sarah’s depiction: “She is so graceful, at peace. Angelic even.” These words not only capture his vision of Sarah, but also La Samaritaine’s central focus on religious women. The play, based on the biblical story of the Samaritan Woman, depicts Photine’s journey into Christianity after meeting Jesus. This is the first legitimizing factor for women in art: religion. Specifically within Christianity, representation of women has traditionally been seen through icons of the Madonna and Child as well as other saints. However, researcher Stephanie Schäfer-Bossert notes in “The Representation of Women in Religious Art and Imagery” that she “discovered a tradition of powerful, symbolic images of women designed as models of strength and virtue.” This notion brings a sense of power to female representation in Christian art. Yet, Schäfer-Bossert continues, “by the eighteenth century, strong females began to disappear. By mid-nineteenth century, women had become either invisible or, where their images still existed within the church, were diminutive, domestic, or angel-like.” So while Rostand’s character Photine may harken back to one of the few strong female characters in the Bible, Mucha’s angel-like
interpretation connects directly to the later demure sense of virtuous women.

“Gismonda, who cared what the play was about, the name is pretty and she is glorious.”

While Mucha’s sentiment regarding Gismonda by Victorien Sardou is not particularly enlightening to the imagery used in the show, his poster helps to capture the nuances. In the painting, Bernhardt admires a palm leaf, and the floral crown atop her head resembles a laurel wreath, each signifying the sacred trees of Apollo in Greek mythology. Gismonda, a melodrama set in Athens, is heavily influenced by the legacy of ancient Greecian culture. Within the first scene, a group of men provide commentary on a statue of Aphrodite, setting a precedent for the misogyny Gismonda must endure throughout. Much like the goddess of love herself, Gismonda’s story is dependent on the male gaze. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was once viewed as the epitome of feminine beauty. This concept travelled through the ages from Praxiteles’ Aphrodite of Knidos to Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and beyond. However, Aphrodite’s origin story alludes to its own special brand of sexism. The goddess was not conceived in a natural manner, but was raised from the sea, erupting from foam created when the god Cronus tossed his father’s severed genitalia into the sea. This unorthodox birth is not all too eccentric within the Greecian myths; in fact Aphrodite is not even the only goddess born without a mother! Athena, goddess of war, sprang fully-grown from her father Zeus’ skull! In her analysis of women in classical Greek art, Professor Bonnie Kutbay evaluates this recurrence of motherless birth: “That she was born without the aid of a woman, solely through the efforts of a male, is significant in the psychological power she wielded over the Greeks in representational art.” In other words, Aphrodite, one of the most revered female deities of the culture, was born entirely due to the actions of men. Worse yet, she was born of an act of hatred and mutilation. The idea that feminine love and beauty is born through toxic masculinity is ages old and has therefore influenced the perception of female beauty over time.

“La Dame aux Camilias, completely rapturous, the thing painted itself. If only we could have her die for us forever.”

Mucha’s poster for La Dame aux Camilias by Alexander Dumas fils very clearly plays upon the relationship between the leading lady, Marguerite Gautier, and her flowers. Margueritte, a courtesan, obtains her nickname, the Lady of the Camellias, because she uses camellia flowers to advertise whether or not she is available to be sexually active. Wearing a

| Mucha’s poster for “Gismonda.” |

1 fils is the French version of “Jr” and appears sometimes in French names.
red flower was a signifier that she was menstruating and, due to the stigma around this, that she was unable to participate in intercourse. Meanwhile, a white flower showed her suitors she was down to fornicate. This connection between floral and feminine aesthetics is incredibly prevalent in our society. But why? In *The Meaning of Gardens: Idea, Place and Action*, a book about garden design as an intersection of art, culture, and nature, it is suggested, “that both women and flowers are seen by men as beautiful, frail, and useless, [which] reminds us that flowers are appropriate names for women... but never for men”. In naming Marguerite the Lady of Camellias, she becomes no more than a beautiful flower and a sexual object. She, like so many women in art, is stripped of her complexity and placed in the narrative to serve the men around her.

“Nothing can capture you, Mother.”
These words, spoken at the end of *Bernhardt/Hamlet* by Sarah’s son Maurice, could not be more true. Sarah Bernhardt could not be captured by art because the themes used to emulate her were not complex enough to do so. No person can be defined solely by how flowery or angelic they are, nor by how successfully they fit into the role of a sex symbol. Much like Maurice, some would argue that no person can ever be truly captured by art. Each individual is multifaceted and therefore the way in which they represent themselves, or in which they view others, is continuously evolving. The art is bound to change depending on the moment in which it is captured, influenced by a variety of internal and external factors that affect both the artist and the subject. Even so, it is clear that Mucha’s perspective of Bernhardt was impacted by the culture in which he lived as well as the deeply rooted traditions of the art world. And this is certainly not the only occurrence of this problem. Women, as well as many other disenfranchised groups, have been historically misrepresented and forced into boxes incapable of containing their complex identities. It is stories like that of Sarah Bernhardt, and the many ways she was portrayed, that can help us break down the stereotypical iconography that remains pervasive in our society. This in turn, will hopefully allow those in the future to be represented justly, even if Maurice’s sentiment is deemed truthful.

All images can be found on Alphonse Mucha’s complete online collection of works.
Shakespeare’s Women, or Viola’s Great, but *Twelfth Night* Isn’t Titled “Viola” 

by LUCY BROOKS

“Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we, For such as we are made of, such we be.” - Viola, *Twelfth Night*, Act II Scene ii

*Twelfth Night’s* Viola is widely perceived as one of Shakespeare’s strongest and most gender-defiant female characters. Yet, in Act II Scene ii she proclaims that women are weak by nature, because their bodies are more frail than those of men. This misogynistic insertion into the dialogue of a supposedly independent and self-sufficient woman is disheartening, and demonstrates that Viola may not be the feminist hero that audiences have made her out to be. *Twelfth Night* is a not so subtle reminder that, even though Shakespeare is known as the greatest writer of all time, he was probably a 15th century man. To be prominent in a Shakespearean play, women must be controlled by a man or pretend to be one.

In Tina Packer’s 2015 book, *Women of Will: Following the Feminine in Shakespeare’s Plays*, she reports on the amount of women in Shakespeare’s plays. Packer writes, “There are usually two to four women in each of the plays--as opposed to ten to twenty men; women are always the minority, always the “other” in some way. I counted.” When examining the sheer inequity of the number of women versus men in Shakespeare’s works, it can be deduced that the men are probably the characters driving the stories. Having a spectrum of nuanced male characters while having only one or two female characters also means that the few women must represent all of womanhood amongst themselves. In other words, the fewer female characters, the greater the judgment, and the expectation that they will be “perfect.” For example, Saint Joan of Arc is the only major female character in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*, and she is literally Joan of Arc; yet the play is called *Henry VI*.

Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of two women in the entire play, and, although she is mentioned in the title, it’s derogatorily as “the shrew.” To highlight Katherine’s transformation over the course of this play, the following quotes are taken from the beginning and end of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In Act II Scene i, Katherine meets Petruchio, the pompous man intent on marrying her for her father’s mother. Katherine boldly responds to an insult of him calling her a wasp by retorting, “If I be waspish, best beware my sting.” This quick-witted and fiery threat occurring during Katherine’s very first interaction with Petruchio starkly contrasts with the following excerpt from a soliloquy she elicits in Act V Scene ii: “Such duty as the subject owes the prince, Even such a woman oweth to her husband. And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour, And not obedient to his honest will, What is she but a foul contending rebel And graceless traitor to her loving lord?” In this statement, Katherine says that a wife should treat her husband as if he is a prince and she his subject. To further highlight the lengths to which Katherine has been “tamed,” she adds that a disobedient woman is a loathsome and ungrateful traitor to her husband. These two quotes alone highlight that despite this play featuring a bold and feisty female character, audiences are shown that such a woman must be dealt with, and it is a man’s job to do the dealing.

Katherine is nuanced, brave, and challenging at the beginning of her story, but the play is titled *The Taming of the Shrew*. and Petruchio manages to do just that through “starving her, taking her clothes... [and] her language away from her, making her lie about what she sees and what she knows.” It should also be
noted that *The Taming of the Shrew* is a Shakespearean comedy, because it ends in the wedding between Katherine’s sister, Bianca, and her foppish lover, Lucentio. What other message could Shakespeare be sending than abusing unruly women is the best way to make them marriage material? After all, everyone in *The Taming of the Shrew* ends up happier because of Petruchio’s abuse of Katherine, and there are no ramifications. If this same character existed in a play centered around her experience, simply called “Katherine,” she would hopefully be able to remain the complicated woman that she is in Act I.

*As You Like It*’s Rosalind is another famous female Shakespearean protagonist. The literary critic Anne Barton has said of her, “Rosalind is extraordinarily important in *As You Like It*; as central and dominating a figure in her fashion as Hamlet in his own, very different play.” Rosalind is without a doubt the driving force of her play, but even here, the title betrays its heroine: *Hamlet* is called *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* is not called “Rosalind”.

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind dresses as a man when she is banished from her uncle’s court and embarks on a journey through a forest in pursuit of freedom. The motivation for Rosalind’s cross-dressing is to protect herself from the violence she would receive if she dressed as a woman. This idea reflects that Rosalind disguising herself as a man raises her status to the surrounding society, while a male character dressing as a woman would be a breach of his status. It also speaks to the gender power dynamics of the time, and today’s, that it made more sense for Rosalind to dress and live as her alter-ego Ganymede for her own safety.

In Act I, Scene iii, Rosalind describes her choice to dress as a man on her journey, “Were it not better, Because that I am more than common tall, That I did suit me all points like a man? A gallant curtal-ax upon my thigh, A boar-spear in my hand, and in my heart Lie there what hidden woman’s fear there will, We’ll have a swashing and a martial outside.” She explains that all she has to do to appear like a man is dress like one and carry several weapons, suggesting that masculinity is merely a role to be played. While this
is a hopeful and progressive statement, it is then followed by her adding that she will hide her “woman’s fear” in her heart, alluding to the idea that women are naturally fearful. Rosalind’s intelligence and thoughtfulness is made apparent in this dialogue, but Shakespeare had to add a jab at the apparent weakness of emotionality and femininity, for balance. To again address the title of the play, since Rosalind is disguised as Ganymede for the majority of As You Like It, why would the play be called Rosalind? She does not get the luxury of living truthfully as herself in this play. Rosalind, as she is, is not the focus.

Another play in which the brave female protagonist is disguised as a man for the majority of her story is Twelfth Night. It is no coincidence that Viola, like Rosalind, spends most of her story as a man; in this case the servant, Cesario. Why write stories about women pretending to be men, if he could have just made their characters the men that they pretend to be? Perhaps then, As You Like It would be called “Ganymede,” and Twelfth Night, “Cesario.”

In the Shakespearean plays that follow a female character as the main protagonist, her story always ends in marriage. Hamlet dies in Hamlet, Macbeth dies in Macbeth, King Lear dies in King Lear, and Othello dies in Othello. But Petruchio tames Katherine, Viola marries Orsino, and Rosalind marries Orlando. The oppression of married women in the Elizabethan era is made clear in Act III, Scene ii of The Taming of the Shrew, when Petruchio insists that Katherine is his property, “I will be master of what is mine own. She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house, My household stuff, my field, my barn, My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.” The women leads of Shakespeare inevitably belong to someone else when their stories end.

The plays are called The Taming of the Shrew, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night, because Katherine, Rosalind, and Viola’s stories are not their own. But what’s in a name?

Bryce Dallas Howard as Rosalind and David Oyelowo as Orlando in Kenneth Branagh’s 2006 film of “As You Like It.” Photo Courtesy of Newsweek.
Bernhardt/Hamlet is in good company this season at the Goodman. Between Lisa Loomer’s Roe about the case that legalized abortion, Jose Cruz Vasquez’s American Mariachi about an all-women Mariachi band and Jocelyn Bioh’s School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play about issues of colorism and friendship at a Ghanian high school, the Goodman will spend this season telling the stories of women who fought to change the status quo. And there couldn’t be a more appropriate time for these stories than right now, with a record-breaking number of women in Congress trying to ensure that the work of these women isn’t undone.

The Goodman isn’t the only theater in Chicago that has committed a recent season to women’s stories. Here are four Chicago theaters that are rewriting age-old works to focus on women.

1. Lookingglass Theatre’s Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein
We know Frankenstein. The big green guy with the nails in his head. But Lookingglass reminds us how the Frankenstein phenomenon began: from the brilliant literary mind of an 18-year-old woman.

The play begins with author Mary Shelley and her friends telling ghost stories. As Shelley crafts the magical world of Frankenstein, it comes to life before the audience’s eyes. We see the story develop as it does in Shelley’s head. The play takes us into the world of the creature, but never leaves its author behind: her life weaving in and out of the Frankenstein plotline.

Once Shelley published the book, it took off on a trajectory of its own. It was made into movies, parodies, and games but it lost its connection to its author. The Lookingglass production reunites the two, and reminds us that women’s accomplishments pervade.
every field, even horror.

2. The Runaways Lab Theatre’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The Oscar Wilde classic *The Picture of Dorian Gray* follows a beautiful man named Dorian, kind on the inside and beautiful on the outside until an artist paints a magnificent portrait of him. He then becomes vain and unkind, and as he does, the image of him in the painting becomes older and older until both he and the painting die -- narcissistic, lonely, and out of touch with reality. The story received an extreme makeover from the Runaways Lab Theatre. In their adaptation, Dorian Gray is a beautiful young woman. An Art Institute dropout and tattoo artist, Ivy, becomes enamored with her beauty and sketches a portrait of her. When Ivy’s art dealer, Henry, discovers the sketch, he thinks it is a masterpiece and is elated. He realizes that the sketch could make both of them famous, but Ivy refuses to sell it. So, he decides that the avenue to success may not be Ivy. It may, in fact, be Dorian herself.

3. The Hypocrites’ *Dracula*

In true 1800s fashion, the purpose of the women in *Dracula* is to revolve around the men. The two women are Lucy, the woman Dracula stalks, and Mina, the woman Dracula marries. Though they are central characters in the plot, they are two-dimensional in personality. In the Hypocrites adaptation, however, the women are the standout characters. Lucy and Mina are independent, free-spirited women and that is what draws Dracula to them.

This progressive Transylvania is home to another unconventional woman: Renfield. In the original story, Renfield is Dracula’s kooky right hand man. This production presents the character as a woman in order to tackle the issue of women being seen as “hysterical”. Though this Renfield still eats bugs and birds, the production asks us to consider: was Renfield born a little unhinged from reality or was she driven to this behavior by the men around her?

4. City Lit Stage’s *J.B. in Treble Key*

City Lit Stage remakes a remake of an ancient story: the Bible’s *Book of Job*. When Archibald MacLeish created *J.B.*, a modern-day version of the *Book of Job*, City Lit saw an opportunity to refresh the story even more. They did the play with a cast entirely comprised of women.

*J.B.* uses the story of Job to think critically about the lessons we are supposed to gain from the Bible. Why should we worship someone so ruthless? Why should we trust a being so unforgiving? Is it really worthwhile? City Lit’s cast touches on the universality within the story. People of every gender deal with the issue of needing to rely on an inherently unjust world. City Lit reminds us that women in the Bible weren’t written about as individuals; they existed to be mothers and wives to men. They weren’t seen as intellectually complex people who were tested by God. But this production reminds us that women face the same moral crossroads that anyone else does, both in biblical times and today.

The zeitgeist of America is changing and Chicago theaters are right there along for the ride. And no one knows better than theater artists that the best way to forge a better future is by looking into the past. Perhaps that is why Chicago is remaking old classic stories with a feminist spin. We can mine even more meaning out of a story if we view it with a different perspective. If we can seamlessly integrate women into history maybe we will be inspired to envision a present that integrates women in the same way. Maybe the old beloved classics don’t have to perpetuate an American patriarchy. Maybe they can yield a future of equality.
"Holding up a Mirror to Nature": The Play-Within-A-Play Device
by QUENNA L. BARRETT

Literature and other popular forms of storytelling – television shows, movies, etc – have long used the “story within a story”, also known as the frame story or framing device. Sometimes these “inner” stories are used purely for entertainment, as is the case with the fictional TV show Due North on Issa Rae’s Insecure about slavery in antebellum south featuring real-life star Regina Hall. Sometimes the inner story is a satirical comment on a real-world issue, like The Simpsons’ Itchy and Scratchy Show which one writer posits as a critique of the violence and other behaviors permitted in American media, even (and perhaps especially) in cartoons. Other times the inner story is employed to illustrate something about the characters or life of the outer world. In Bernhardt/ Hamlet, and in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, this is the case.

Several sources list Shakespeare as one of the first to use the play-within-a-play device, with many references to its use in Hamlet. The title character invites a troupe of actors to stage a play, The Murder of Gonzago, to observe his uncle Claudius’ reaction to the murder, in essence, proving that he did in fact murder Hamlet’s father, Claudius’ own brother.

Thomas Kyd, a contemporary of Shakespeare, is noted as the first to use the device in 1587 with his play The Spanish Tragedy, which was also the play that established the theatrical genre of the “revenge play”. Other well-known examples of plays using the play-within-a-play include: Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Nights Dream, Anton Chekhov’s The Seagull, Kander and Ebb’s Cabaret and the Kit Kat Klub, and Tom Stoppard’s The Real Thing.

But before Shakespeare and Kyd, there were ancient cultures using stories within stories as literary devices (and probably people and societies betwixt and between). Some of these include ancient Indian, Arabic, and Persian cultures. Even Homer makes use of this device over and over again in the Odyssey.

The term play within a play or story within a story is derived from the French phrase, “mise en abyme,” which translates to “placed in abyss”; in art history, this is known as a “formal technique of placing a copy of an image within itself.”

In the case of Bernhardt/ Hamlet, we don’t get to see the full “inner play”; presumably, we know it. Our playwright, Theresa Rebeck doesn’t choose Hamlet as her inner play; she chooses a real woman and her real production of playing Hamlet as a woman to focus on. The play within a play device, even though not quite fully utilized in this play, allows us to understand Bernhardt’s social and political context, and mirrors much about the current socio-political climate for women, trans, queer, and non-binary folks today. There is another play within this play, too, that Bernhardt’s lover, Edmond Rostand, is writing, which we come to learn is reflective of their affair and what it does to his wife and the mother of his child.

One academic, Dieter Mehl, speaks of using the device as a way of “holding up a mirror to nature.” He mentions another use, which is to use it as a “moral weapon” as happens in Hamlet’s inner play, The Murder of Gonzago. Hamlet, the character, uses that play to bring his uncle’s guilty conscious to the forefront. Might Rebeck, through Bernhardt’s story, be calling into question a modern morality of what a woman’s role is? What other mirrors might we find in this work?
Throughout *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, several characters rehearsing for *Hamlet* (the play within the play) speak to the beauty, complexity, and universality of Shakespeare’s poetry. While Shakespeare is certainly one of the most revered wordsmiths in literature, poetry as a popular form of storytelling has persisted beyond Shakespeare’s time and has been adapted and developed by poets worldwide. How have the forms and structures of poetry varied from place to place and from time to time? And what connections to math and science can we mine from this popular literary form?

A major factor in poetry’s persistence and popularity is the natural and scientific human response to hearing poetry. In recent years, several teams of neuroscientists in Europe have explored the brain’s responses to poetry using technology like fMRI (functional magnetic resource imaging), and EEG devices. By utilizing these technologies in scientific studies, teams of researchers in the UK have determined that our brains can sense structural rules and categorize that poem as “good”, anticipate the rhymes and rhythms of poetry, and experience a burst of electrical activity in the fraction of a second after hearing the end of a poem.

Other researchers in Germany have studied similar effects by recording the heart rates, facial expressions, and even the movement of skin and arm hairs of subjects as they listened to poetry. As indicated by the recorded responses (which included goosebumps, recorded on a device lovingly nicknamed the “Goosecam” by the researchers) the subjects experienced a “chill” in the
moment right before hearing the lines of poetry which they later described as particularly moving or evocative. This indicated that the human brain is able to anticipate an emotional reaction to poetry, even in poems we have never heard before.

In addition to amazing connections between poetry and science, there are also connections between poetry and math. If you’ve ever studied music or played an instrument, you’re already familiar with the math involved in music theory. For instance: If a piece of music has 4 beats in a measure, how many eighth notes could we play in that measure? Many forms of poetry follow a familiar musical cadence and rhythm, while other forms of poetry provide more flexibility in form. Math is present in many different structures of poetry, and poetry can also be a conduit for exploring mathematical concepts.

A structure used in poetry that is referenced in *Bernhardt/Hamlet* is **iambic pentameter**. Iambic pentameter is a particular poetic structure, widely used by Shakespeare and other contemporary English poets. In each line using iambic pentameter, there are five “iamb”. An **iamb is a unit in a line of poetry** that contains two syllables, the first of which is an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable. For example, the words “unite” and “decide” are iambic. “**Pentameter**” refers to the number of iambs contained in each line. What other math words have the same root as “pentameter”? What number is linked to the root “penta”?

If there are 5 iambs in each line, how many syllables are in a single line written in iambic pentameter?

Shakespeare was also known for his use of the poetic structure of the **sonnet**, a form which is written in iambic pentameter. The original iteration of the sonnet was developed by the Italian poet Petrarch in the 14th century and was primarily used as a form for love poems. The sonnet continued to gain popularity across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, and was adapted by other poets, most notably by Shakespeare. This newer form is known as an English sonnet and has a slightly different structure than the Italian sonnet. Shakespeare wrote over 100 sonnets and is known for perfecting the form.

Here is one of Shakespeare’s most well known sonnets, “**Sonnet 18**”. Read it out loud and then answer the questions below to learn about the characteristics of a sonnet:

*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?*  
*Thou art more lovely and more temperate:*

**Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,**  
*And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:*

**Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,**  
*And often is his gold complexion dimm’d;*

**And every fair from fair sometime declines,**  
*By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm’d;*

**But thy eternal summer shall not fade**  
*Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;*

**Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,**  
*When in eternal lines to time thou growest:*

**So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,**  
*So long lives this and this gives life to thee.*

Answers to the follow questions can be found on page 41.

1. **Questions:**  
   How many lines are in the poem?  
   How many syllables are in each line?  
   Which lines rhyme with each other?  
   What is different about the rhyming structure in the last two lines?

Also in the 17th century, another popular poetic form was developed by the Japanese poet Basho: the **haiku** (or hokku). This structure was later adapted
in European cultures in the early 20th century and became a popular structure in English. The following is a haiku called “Confidence”, written by Philip Appleman and modeled after the poetry of Basho:

Clouds murmur darkly, it is a blinding habit—gazing at the moon.

2) Questions:
How many lines are in the poem?

How many syllables are in each line?

Which lines rhyme with each other?

What is the subject of the poem?

What grammatical tense is the poem written in?

While many poems are built around structures with specific syllable counts, other forms go beyond counting into exploring geometry concepts. A popular example is the square poem. Below are two different examples of what we'll call a simple square poem written by poet and mathematician JoAnne Growney. Can you guess what makes each of these poems a simple square poem?

Poem 1
Mock feelings serve as well as true ones.

Poem 2
When lovers leave, avoid laments. Grab a cactus--new pain forgets.

3) Questions:
How many syllables are in each line?

Which lines rhyme with each other?

What is the subject of the poem?

What physical shape does each poem have?

How many lines are in each poem?

While these square poems have a relatively simple structure, the ideal square poem has an additional complication, as illustrated by poem pictured above by Lewis Carroll.

4) Question: What is unique about this poem pictured above?

EXTRA BONUS CHALLENGE: Try writing your own square poem, even 3 lines long! Here are a few shorter examples of ideal square poems by M. H. Forsyth for inspiration:

I am
Am I?

She has eyes
Has she sense
Eyes sense me

Another type of poem inspired by geometry is the
Fibonacci poem, based on the Fibonacci sequence. The Fibonacci poem, also called a Fib for short, was first published by writer and librarian Gregory Pincus in 2006. What do you think makes each of the following two poems, written by Pincus, a Fibonacci poem?

Poem 1
Slam!
Dunk!
Soaring . . .
I’m scoring.
Crowd keeps on roaring.
In my dreams I’m unstoppable.

Poem 2
Tell
Fibs.
What time?
Every day
Two seconds before
Clocks hit 11:24.

5) Questions:
What is the Fibonacci sequence?
How is the Fibonacci sequence used in the structure of the poem?
What is the subject of each poem?

For more on the Fibonacci sequence and its mind-blowing connections to math, science, and nature, watch the first in this excellent series of videos.

I’ll leave you with a limerick by Leigh Mercer, pictured below.

Yes, I promise this is really a poem. And it is also a true equation!

A limerick is a humorous poem comprised of 5 lines with an AABBA rhyme structure. The “B” lines are about half the length of each of the “A” lines. Here is an example of a limerick by Ogden Nash:

A flea and a fly in a flue
Were imprisoned, so what could they do?
Said the fly, “let us flee!”
“Let us fly!” said the flea.
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

6) Question: Using what you know about math symbols, limericks, and the order of operations, can you figure out how to read the rest of the poem?

A hint: The first line of the limerick is “A dozen, a gross, and a score...”

A limerick by Leigh Mercer
Guiding Questions for *Bernhardt/Hamlet*
by DANA MUNRO

1. Throughout the play Sarah can seem brash and self-indulgent. Was that behavior necessary for a woman to make her voice heard in the 1800s? Is Sarah a good role model?

2. A story’s climax can take many different forms: a change in character, a turn of events, achieving or failing to achieve a goal. What is the climax of *Bernhardt/Hamlet*? How do you know?

3. Sarah’s comrades shower her in praise and let her get away with anything she wants, consequence-free. Does fame indicate that someone is truly superior or wiser than the rest of us? Is a celebrity’s bad behavior the price we pay as a society for giving someone so much praise?

4. *Hamlet* has been adapted numerous times. Why? What is it about a play that compels artists to adapt it? What other famous plays or stories have been adapted?

5. Is it moral to adapt a play without the playwright’s permission? What if the playwright is dead? When does a play become ethically public domain?
**THEATRE ETIQUETTE**

**What should I wear?**
Dress according to your school’s dress code. The Goodman is air conditioned, so **bring a sweater or extra layer** in case you get cold in the theatre.

**Be respectful** to the artists onstage and to your fellow audience members. Wait until intermission and after the performance to talk, and remain in your seat during the performance. Be mindful of others seated next to and in front of you. **Wait until after the show to use phones or electronic devices.** The glow from the screen is distracting to your fellow audience members AND the actors, who can see your phone from onstage!

**Eating, drinking, and smoking** are not allowed while inside the theatre.

**How should I respond to what’s going on on the stage?**
Honestly and appropriately. Attending a theatre performance is different from watching a movie at home; in a theatre, you are in a room full of people who can hear your responses just as you can hear theirs. Most importantly, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feedback to what is happening onstage (laughter at jokes, gasps at surprising moments) but might be distracted if it is inappropriate (laughter at the wrong time, talking when it is not warranted). Whether we enjoy the play or not, we owe respect to the actors.

**What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?**
You should only leave the theatre if it is an **emergency**. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.
What to do before the show:
When you arrive at the Goodman at 10:30am, you will wait to enter the theatre with your group. Once your group is called, a staff member will lead you to your seats. Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

What to do during intermission:
Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, use the restroom (located on both floors), get some water, and discuss the play with your friends. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby with flash several times. That is your cue to get back to your seat, because the performance is about to begin!

What to do after the show:
There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask any respectful questions you might have about the play, the job of the artists, or behind-the-scenes secrets.
1) **Answer:** An English/Shakespearean sonnet is 14 lines long, with each line containing 10 syllables and written in iambic pentameter. A sonnet is comprised of 3 quatrains with an **abab cdcd efef** rhyme scheme and ends with a rhyming couplet. A **quatrain** is a set of 4 lines with the rhyming scheme **abab**, which means that the “a” lines rhyme with each other and the “b” lines rhyme with each other. A **rhyming couplet** is comprised of two lines which rhyme with each other. After three quatrains establish the main theme or idea of the poem, the couplet provides a twist or turn to the main idea of the poem right at the end.

2) **Answer:** A haiku is usually divided into three lines, the first and last with five syllables, the second with seven. However this total 17 syllable structure is not a hard and fast rule, as it is considered more important to capture the essence of haiku, which involves simple imagery evoking the beauty of a specific event or observation of nature written in the present tense.

3) **Answer:** A square poem is named for both its square appearance and for having an equal number of lines in the poem to the number of syllables contained in each line. What might a mathematical formula for this poetic structure look like?

4) **Answer:** This square poem contain 6 lines and 6 words in each line, and can be read both horizontally and vertically from the top, resulting in the same poem read either way. This is an especially difficult form to compose.

5) **Answer:** In the Fibonacci sequence, each number in the sequence is the sum of the previous two numbers (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, etc.). A **Fib poem is generally six lines long**, starting with a one syllable line, then following the Fibonacci sequence until ending with an 8 syllable line.

6) **Answer:** A dozen, a gross, and a score
Plus three times the square root of four
Divided by seven
Plus five times eleven
Is nine squared and not a bit more.