

## TOP TIPS FOR COMMUNING WITH THE BARD

### AKA, Suggestions for getting the most out of your Shakesperience...

#### 1. Be actively and deliberately engaged.

- Shakespeare takes a little warm-up time for the ear. The words will come across more clearly to you after 10 to 15 minutes. You don't need to catch every word.
- Just like listening to a new song, the rhythms help you understand without picking up on all the lyrics.
- An actor's body movement tells you a lot. If character takes up a lot of physical space and another seems still and small, that is a clue to the difference in their personalities.
- Notice vocal sounds. If a character says something you didn't quite pick up, notice how the other character(s) react.
- Does a character's voice, movement, or behavior change? There's a reason. Try to figure it out!
- Shakespeare's characters tend to run in "packs." Figure out which characters go together. Notice how the "packs" change over the course of the play. (See The Four Houses article for clues.)
- You and your fellow audience members are all in this together. Shakespeare takes focus so minimize your cell phone, side conversations, and walking in and out, however...
- Audiences in outdoor theater are encouraged to react aloud to the story! Are you moved? Let's hear it!

#### 2. Every Shakespeare production you ever see is a "cover."

- Notice the choices that artists make without expecting them to mimic other artists or productions. New artists doing a cover don't imitate others, and neither do Shakespeare productions.
- A production under 3 hours has had portions of the script cut. What you see is almost never what you would read, and you aren't likely to see the same version of the script twice. Ever.
- Summaries are good for the overall shape of a story, character names, or relationships, but productions may make choices that differ from a description of the entire play as written.

#### 3. Theater is different from TV and film.

- We're used to film and TV using music to tell us what to *feel*, but in theater, the actors are our best clue.
- Film and TV use close-ups and camera pans to show us where to *look*, but the actors do that onstage.
- We're used to film and TV having absolute control of sound and silence to tell us what to *listen to*, but while the actors will do that to some degree, we must commit to focusing our own attention.
- In theater, nothing stops. There is no rewind.

#### 4. Take it further and try something new.

- Every Shakespeare play begins with Act One Scene One. If you'd like to see how the play you're going to view has been "covered" by other theaters, go to YouTube, type in the title of the play, and then type *act one scene one*. Choose a couple of different clips and be amazed at how the actors, set, costumes, music, lighting, and audience seating environment can alter your experience of roughly the same script!
- After you've watched the scene a couple of times, think about how YOU would cast the roles with actors you know. Who could your favorite actor play? Why would s/he "match" that role? Thinking like a casting director can help you do more than just follow the story.
- Come see our productions more than once! Notice how a different audience and different environmental distractions change not only *your* experience, but also the *actors'* performances.