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ZOOM THEATRE A New Frontier

Written by **Chauncey Miller**

Pictured to the right.



Neil Armstrong had no idea what to expect when he first stepped on the moon. Sure, he could have gone through simulations or made some sort of hypothesis but until he was “boots on the ground” he couldn’t say for sure. That is exactly how I felt when I began directing my first play, virtual or otherwise, this past summer of 2020.

During the start of the pandemic, like many of you, I had plenty of time on my hands, so I decided to read one of Shakespeare’s “History Plays”. Julius Caesar might just be my favorite of the Bard. The language is some of his finest, in my opinion, and the ever present through line of the power of persuasion seems like it could have been inspired by today’s society as opposed to ancient Rome. So when Sherri Raeford, founder and Artistic Director of Shared Radiance, asked me to direct a play of my choosing for Zoom I felt the time was right for me to make my directorial debut.

Now, I’m sure directing for the first time can be a stressful journey for anyone but when it’s Shakespeare, and through a new medium no less, the light at the end of the tunnel seems to move further away with every step. Coincidentally, that is what gave me solace. I kept telling myself this is terrain no one has ever been through before so it’s okay if you mess up. Just keep going for the sake of the cast and crew but most importantly for the directors that will come after you. I’m grateful that I did. I’m also grateful to Bill Pirkey, tech guru and editor, and John T. Shea, sound engineer, for being the best copilots anyone could have.

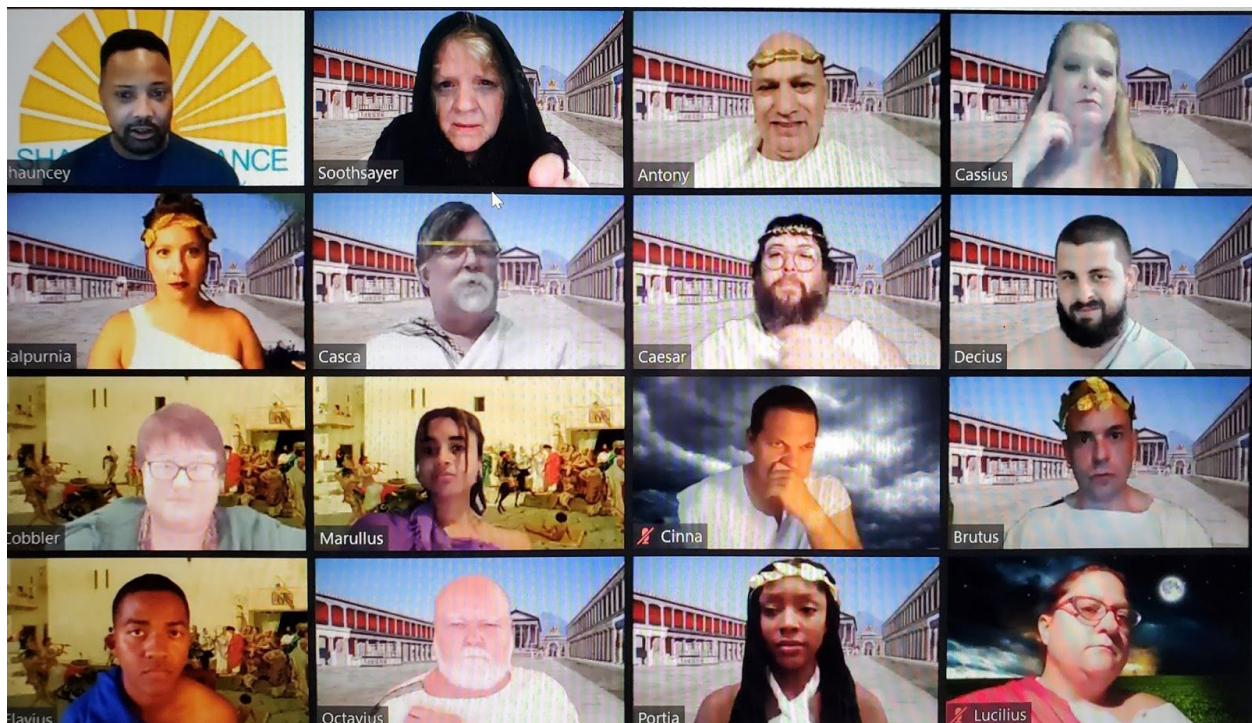
Together, John, Bill, and I played a month-long game of trial and error. Zoom isn’t a platform meant for theatre but as artists do, we made a canvas out of whatever was around us. The three of us had our own tech meetings where we discussed cutting from scene to scene, how to best incorporate sound and music, what our biggest challenges might be and how we could overcome them. John spent hours coming up with a fantastic sound plot for Caesar and turned in a great performance as Octavius. Bill held his own meetings with our cast to ensure they had the right lighting, framing, audio, and video capabilities so we would have a show worth watching. Had Bill and John not been there, Julius Caesar, the play itself would have died long before Cassius’ plot.

But of course, the audience doesn’t get to see all of that. They just see the actors, who in this production were wonderful and patient. They came with a thirst to perform from as far away as New York City and remarkably adjusted to this new hybrid of stage and film. Each one had to be their own stagehand, prop master, cinematographer, lighting designer, and make up and hair artist all while grasping the language, translation, and sentiment of the characters. Well, one actor, Chris

Veneris was able to get assistance from his wife, Linda, to transform into Caesar's ghost. Every single actor was able to perform beyond the limitations of their computer screens to give the appearance that they were all in the same space only a few feet away from each other and not 500 miles apart, in some cases.

It wasn't perfect but live performance rarely is. I'm thankful for the opportunity Sherri gave me and am proud of the artifact we created for others to enjoy and hopefully learn from. Shared Radiance travelled through uncharted waters and found land on the other side. That's one small step for a theatre, one giant leap for theatre kind.

You can watch **Julius Caesar** on [Youtube](#).



(Left to right, top row) Chauncey Miller, Sherri Raeford, John D. Swain, Jenni Pirkey, (second row from top) Stephanie Nusbaum, Randy Morris, Chris Veneris, Drew Poplin, (third row from top) Jennifer Sheridan Eash, Jasmine Fuchs, Carl J. Grasso, Christopher Taylor, (bottom row) David Merritt Jr., John Shea, Alyssa Renee' Rambo, and Emily Huneycutt rehearse for Shared Radiance's production of *Julius Caesar: A Zoom Experience*. Photo taken by Sherri Raeford.

SISTERS OF MINE: HEAR THE VOICES

PREMIERES VIRTUALLY

Written by Chappell Upper

Photography by Steve Raeford

The cast poses in costumes rented from Triad Stage. (Back row, standing, left to right) Sherri Raeford as Barbara Bynum Henderson, Ruan Walker as Dr. Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, Jenni Pirkey as Helen Morris Lewis, Jalila A. Bowie as Sojourner Truth, Sheryl Renee Chase as Rosa Finocchietti Levis, Robin Gentile as Raven Lewis, Chappell Upper as Susan B. Anthony, (front row, sitting, left to right) Patsy Hawkins as Naomi Locklear, and Lennie Singer as Gertrude Weil hold hands to form a connection.



Produced by Shared Radiance Performing Arts Company (SRPAC) in collaboration with the American Association of University Women (AAUW), *Sisters of Mine: Hear the Voices* celebrates “women involved in the passage of the 19th amendment, including women and issues that were often pushed aside in history,” according to the caption for the trailer. The one-act play is composed of vignettes that take a look into the lives and work of historic women such as Sojourner Truth, Rosa Finocchietti Levis, Gertrude Weil, Susan B. Anthony, Raven and Helen Morris Lewis, Dr. Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, Barbara Bynum Henderson, Martha C. McKay, and the women of Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The play was written, researched, and composed by the members of the ensemble, featured in costume above.

Sisters of Mine: Hear the Voices was scheduled to premiere in Asheville at the AAUW’s state conference this past March but was canceled due to complications from COVID-19. Before the shelter-at-home order took place, several other performances were scheduled around the state closer to the one-hundredth anniversary of the ratification of the nineteenth amendment in August.

As the commemoration got closer and closer, the AAUW and SRPAC began brainstorming ideas for safely putting on the performance. A live Zoom premiere was held on August 25th, 2020 at 8 PM, one day before the anniversary. In the weeks leading up to the event, titled “AAUW NC Presents an Evening at the Theater,” the ensemble adjusted the script and production to work on a virtual

platform. The evening of the performance opened with welcoming guests. The play was followed by a question and answer session with the cast and creatives. Closing remarks were made by AAUW NC President, Jane Terwillegar.

Unfortunately, one cast member was unable to join on August 25th. Robin Gentile, who serves as an actor and musician in the show, was absent from the premiere by no fault of her own. The decision to hold a live Zoom performance came with a change of date. She was sorely missed and SRPAC hopes to get the chance to perform the show again with Robin included.

The possibility of more showings of *Sisters of Mine: Hear the Voices* exists, but only time will tell how things may move forward. The best methods for potential future performances are currently being considered with the utmost care. Follow the SRPAC Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube pages for updates on this project. You can watch the trailer [here](#).



Jenni Pirkey

Director of Shared Radiance's *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*
A Zoom Experience

THE MAGIC IN *MIDSUMMER*

Interview by Sherri Raeford

Photography by Steve Raeford

Introduction by Chappell Upper

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a classic tale for the ages. People who love Shakespeare can find magic in repeated viewings and readings of the play, and even those who don't can quote this famous story. In my personal experience, every actor I've met who's played a part in *Midsummer* holds a soft spot for their memories of the show, whether it helped them reach a milestone in their theatrical development, provided meaning for a real life experience, or gave them a chance to let loose and have fun. Shared Radiance's Zoom production seems to be no exception. Sherri Raeford, Artistic Director and the actor behind this comedy's Puck, called the show "special" and reported ensemble members asking to perform it again in the future.

Why was this production so special? Upon closer inspection, the source seems to be the director, Jenni Pirkey. Shared Radiance was excited to place this talented, fierce woman at the helm of *Midsummer*. Of course, the show wouldn't have happened without our wonderful supporters. Sherri Raeford had the chance to ask Jenni a few questions about directing this play. Read her responses below.

What was the theme/time period/etc. that you chose to tell the story and why?

One of the themes I wanted to keep throughout was the timelessness of *Midsummer*. While I set it in the 1960's, the clothes and music could almost represent any time period. To keep with that I took a good long hard look on how I wanted my fae to be represented. I had noticed that the fairies were usually represented by young people. In this case, it was important to me to have them represented by all ages because fairies are timeless and can be any age. I feel really lucky to have fae of multiple ages.

What was your goal in the "tone" and "mood" of this version of *Midsummer*?

As we have been through so much this year, I really wanted to make a show that was both fun and full of laughter. It was important to me that my actors were able to laugh and smile throughout the rehearsal process. I believe that it made the show not only more enjoyable for the actors, but for the audience as well. If it brought joy and laughter to people even just for those 2 hours, I did what I set out to do.

**How did you approach your work and design with your tech director/editor?
What did you do differently that hadn't been done yet in SRPAC productions?**

Bill Pirkey and I worked very closely on this show. He and I decided that we wanted the show to go even further than the last few shows. When I decided I wanted the actors to be able to “look at each other,” Bill helped me find a way to make that happen. One thing I decided to do was to put the actors in very specific places on the screen. While we had to work within the confines of Zoom, we managed to help the actors create the Midsummer world on their screens. Another thing I wanted to do was to have sort of an overture at the beginning and end of the play. I created a small movie on my computer to do this, and then Bill did a fabulous job editing it into the production.

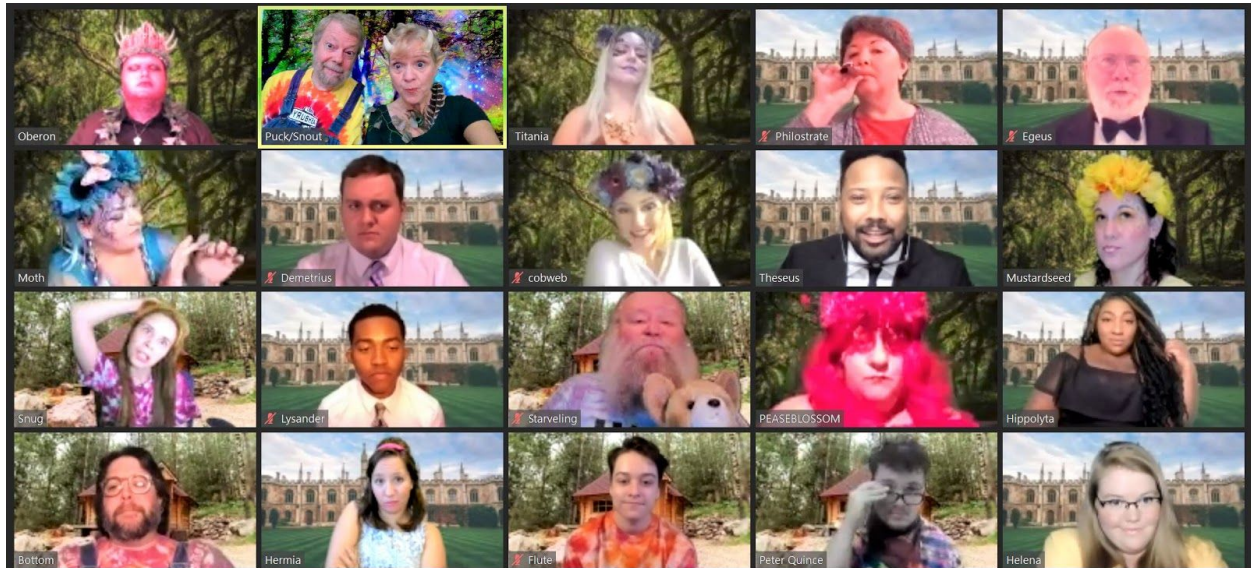
What else would you like to tell us about your directing approach/experience with Midsummer?

No director can make a show on their own. I was very lucky to have an extremely talented cast and tech crew. Without Samm Mickiewicz making such gorgeous crowns, our fae would have been little more than bland. Bill Pirkey's editing made things go so smoothly, the show was amazing to watch. I can't say enough about how much I appreciate my cast. Their professionalism and joy in their roles really shined through. How amazing is that?!?

How did you become involved with SRPAC initially and how has your relationship grown within the company?

I first met Sherri Raeford at a workshop. She was teaching us about what she had learned from the Globe. We got to talking, and I decided to audition for one of her shows. My first show with Shared Radiance was Much Ado About Nothing, playing the hard rocking bad boy, Conrad. Since then I have been fortunate enough to become part of Shakescollage, our amazing school show, and earn a spot as a resident actor. Shared Radiance has become a family to me. I love all of the actors, tech people, and the Artistic Director. Who knew a few years ago, this would become a major part of my life? Thank you to everyone for making that happen.

*You can watch **A Midsummer Night's Dream** on [YouTube](#).*



(Top row, left to right) Michael Mickiewicz, Steve Raeford, Sherri Raeford, Sasha Six, Judy Dove, Dan Manross, (second row from top) Sheryl Renee Chase, Thurston Williams, Charli O'Dell, Chauncey Miller, Amanda Mayes, (third row from top) Carrie Moscoe, David Merritt Jr., Michael Burke, Emily Huneycutt, Brianna Witherspoon, (bottom row) Chris Veneris, Stephanie Nusbaum, Chandler Murray, Nick Scott, and Taylor Neese pose for a post-rehearsal photo. Picture taken by Sherri Raeford.

MEET OUR PLAYERS: JAN YARBOROUGH

The mask maker is unmasked.

Written by Chappell Upper Photography by Carrie Richardson Frye and Sherri Raeford



"The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."

Henry VI, Part II, Act IV, Scene II
Jan's, a lawyer's, favorite Shakespeare quote

Many months ago during the shelter-at-home order Shared Radiance began advertising face masks. Sherri Raeford, Artistic Director, soon began adding special decorations such as rhinestones or paintings for certain masks. However, the seamstress making the masks, often referred to as the "Anonyfamous Mask Maker," chose to remain hidden while turning out colorful, intricately designed protective facial barriers. This went on for a few months, until Jan Yarborough, pictured to the left, was outed when she won an award for her mask making. I had a chance to ask Jan a few questions recently, and I was quite pleased with the results. Read on to see why.

While you've been very involved in Shared Radiance for a number of years now, you don't often appear in front of the audience. For those who don't know you very well, would you mind telling us a little bit about yourself?

I am a wife, mother, lawyer and a registered nurse. I am a partner in Waldrep Wall Babcock and Bailey, a small "boutique" firm based in Winston-Salem, but my office is located in Durham, NC (although my address is "Chapel Hill").

What's your Shared Radiance story?

I have known Sherri since pre-Shared Radiance. We met because we (and our respective husbands) are rather avid ballroom dancers. When she was forming Shared Radiance, I was so impressed with her ideas and presentations, I attended as many of the performances as I could!

In September, you were revealed as our resident mask maker when you won the [Judge's Choice Award](#) for The Arts Council of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County's

"Mask"uerade Virtual Parade. Could you tell us a little bit about your journey as a mask maker? What inspired you to start? What was it like to win that award?

I got started because I wanted to try to be useful. My cousin, a prolific quilter (complete with a long arm quilting machine) offered to set me up with quilt fabric (which tests the best in virus capturing). She gave me two huge grocery store bags full of cute fabric and I remember thinking all the way home that I would never use that much fabric. HA! It was gone in 2 weeks. She also posted a video - for how to make a pleated, lined mask with a filter pocket. That video came in the nick of time because out of the hundreds of mask videos out there, I had tried and hated about 20 others. This one is comfortable! I have made adjustments of course, and added a really nice nose piece/adjuster so the final technique is my own, but the basics are solid and seem to be a comfortable fit for most folks. I have made several custom sizes.

Many of the first bags of fabric had large patterns (such as roosters and chickens). I found out I have a knack for "fussy cutting" - to place the pattern/animal/logo at just the right place to be shown on the masks. That sparked the creative beast inside (and so many people in my life needed masks) that I started mailing them to folks. Sorry about how wonky the first 25 were, but HEY, there was a shortage and

I was trying to help.

I made a few for friends, including Steve and Sherri. AND THEN MY DENTIST showed me her etsy page with masks. I saw one of her masks she had put a few bedazzled stones on -- and something clicked. I am a competitive ballroom dancer -- which means I have a lot of rhinestones. So, I started embellishing many of my masks; I showed Sherri how I glue the stones from a social distance. Sherri stoned a couple of her masks and they looked great. And literally one day, I just wondered out loud to Sherri, "how would it be if I made masks, you blinged them and offered up for donations?" In hindsight, that seems to have been a pretty solid idea.



Two masks made by Jan Yarborough. The mask on the left features a rooster, as mentioned in the quote about "fussy cutting," above. The one on the right features colorful rhinestones.

The announcement for the Judge's Choice award stated "The judges were touched by her (Jan Yarborough's) desire to create something beautiful for someone she loved who battled and BEAT cancer during this pandemic." Would you mind elaborating on that?

My dear stepmother was diagnosed with melanoma of the scalp and had to have a skin graft on her scalp during lock down. The scrub caps the hospital gave her were too slick and too big to stay on; PLUS she loves bling and cats. So, I made her a blinged out cat mask (and a vividly colored coordinating scrub cap). She loved them. I loved them. (I had already made and sent her and my dad many of the fussy cutting masks because they love the novelty of them). It has lifted my spirits so often when folks I barely know (or who have important positions in the world) make a special point to say how much they like how my masks are made and how well they fit. (Plus the prime filter -- I found during a sleepless night on Facebook -- someone's Youtube video popped up about that Filti material!)

In addition to mask making, Sherri Raeford has praised you for your dance skills. How long have you been dancing and why do you enjoy it?

I began clogging in the mountains of North Carolina before I have any memories of learning. I disco danced my way through college and just love moving to music. I started ballroom lessons nearly 30 years ago! I enjoy it because it asks something of my mind other than to work out a problem. It is impossible to move to good music and worry at the same time.

When you're not making masks or dancing, how do you spend your free time?

Backpacking, camping, photography, and hiking.

What's the first thing you'll do when the pandemic is over?

Restart my Yellowstone trip!

Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know? Do you have any final words?

I started formal ballroom dancing late in life and almost missed out on something very important to my mental health. I could have gone my whole life without knowing how fun and joyful moving to music is. If there is ANYTHING creative you think you might enjoy, don't let a late start prevent you from jumping in!

If you would like a mask made by Jan Yarborough, check out the album on our Facebook page titled "[Available Masks](#)."



GOODBYE TO GIBB'S

Written by Chappell Upper Photography by Steve Raeford

"On Sunday, September 13th at 8pm we will have one final "last call" and close our doors for good. We've struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic, but it's proved to be too much.

Thank you to everyone who made Gibb's what it was. The beer lovers, the dog lovers, the musicians, the charities, the wrestlers, the runners, the comics, everyone who came through our doors and made it a fun space, a welcoming space, a community space.

We especially have to thank all the folks who were on our team over the last six years - those who graced us with their ideas, their hard work and their passion."

Gibb's Hundred Brewing Company, [Facebook](#), September 8th, 2020

Gibb's Hundred Brewing Company, a supportive business ally to Shared Radiance, has closed permanently. In the time they were open, the people working at the company helped host and promote Shared Radiance events and the company as a whole. A preview of our Spring 2019 production of Romeo & Juliet as well as a showing of ShakesCollage was held at the brewpub in April of last year. The spot also served as a place to hangout after workshops and shows held in downtown Greensboro.

Gibb's will be sorely missed.



*"And whether we shall meet again I know not.
Therefore our everlasting farewell take:
For ever, and for ever, farewell,
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then, this parting was well made."*

Julius Caesar, Act V, Scene I

In celebration of Shakespeare's birthday in 2019, the Greensboro Public Library, Gibb's Hundred Brewing Company, and Shared Radiance partnered together for a special performance.



A CURTAIN SPEECH FOR *HAMLET*

The director shares thoughts on the next show.

Written by **Stephanie Nusbaum**

Pictured to the right.



For my first real directing adventure, I couldn't think of any other play except for Hamlet. It has always been my favorite, enough for me to name my cat after the title character, a name he wears proudly. This script was written with such passion and showcases the bare human condition. Do we believe even what our minds tell us? Do we trust our hearts? The "To Be or Not To Be" speech can bring even the strongest heart to tears when performed with conviction.

With so many secrets and power struggles, I felt the 1920s was perfect. A time of glamour and joy, before the downfall. Our scene is laid in a speakeasy - a location so full of secrecy and corruption.

Watching the care and love the actors give their lines means the world to me, as I tend to nerd out over the words. I'm sure they will tell you about the many tangents I have gone on for a simple answer.

I am so thankful to Shared Radiance for letting me share my vision with the audience. I am also lucky to have a wonderful group and I know William Shakespeare will be proud of them. I know he would be excited to see the theater still moving along, despite a pandemic. Something which he had experienced and had closed theater. He's probably jealous. This is for you Shakespeare!

I hope you enjoy this performance as much as I do.

*Stay tuned to our Facebook page for more details on the premiere of **Hamlet**.*



AVAILABLE NOW



THE TEMPEST

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTED BY SHERRI RÆFORD

ZOOM: Now Available on YouTube, Edited by Bill Pirkey

IN-PERSON PRODUCTION: To Be Determined

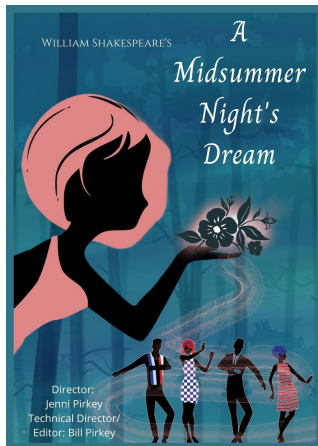
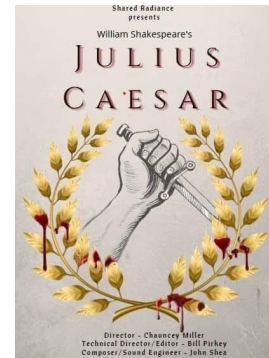
Julius Caesar

A Zoom Experience
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Chauncey Miller

Now Available on YouTube

Edited by Bill Pirkey

Poster by Stephanie Nusbaum



A Midsummer Night's Dream

A Zoom Experience

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Jenni Pirkey

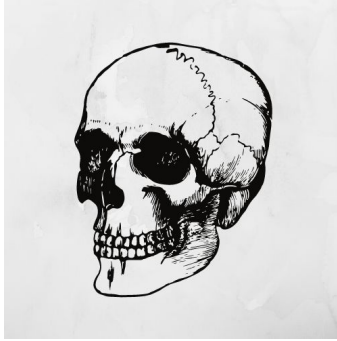
Now Available on YouTube

Edited by Bill Pirkey

Poster by Stephanie Nusbaum



COMING SOON



Hamlet

A Zoom Experience

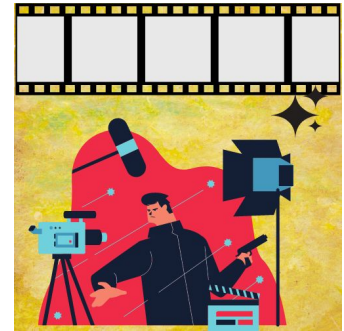
Written by William Shakespeare

Directed by Stephanie Nusbaum

Edited by Bill Pirkey

December 2020

**ACTING FOR THE
CAMERA
MASTERCLASS**
WITH CHRIS VENERIS AND MATT RINGROSE
**On Zoom
To Be Announced**



Shine

An Evening of Variety Celebrating Love

Directed by Sherri Raeford

TO BE DETERMINED

Sisters of Mine

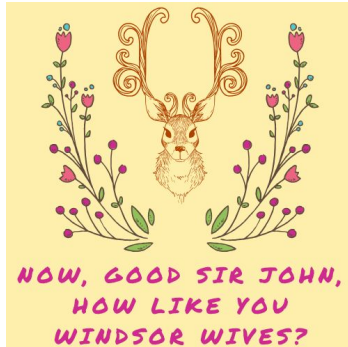
Written by the Shared Radiance

Writing Ensemble

Directed by Sherri Raeford

To Be Determined





THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIRECTED BY CHAPPELL UPPER

To Be Determined

CORIOLANUS BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIRECTED BY LIAM YATES *To Be Determined*



[READ MORE ON OUR
WEBSITE](#)

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