



**BRAVE SPIRITS THEATRE
ARCHIVE**

PROGRAM
Arden of Faversham
2015

Director: Dan Crane
Dramaturg: Cassie Ash

Artistic Director: Charlene V. Smith
Resident Dramaturg: Claire Kimball

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ARDEN OF FAVERSHAM

BECAUSE MARRIAGE IS A BITCH



April 2 - 18, 2015



BRAVE SPIRITS
VERSE AND VIOLENCE

ABOUT BRAVE SPIRITS THEATRE

Founded in 2011, Brave Spirits Theatre is dedicated to plays from the era of verse and violence which contrast the baseness of humanity with the elegance of poetry. By staging dark, visceral, intimate productions of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we strive to tear down the perception of these plays as proper and intellectual and instead use them to explore the boundaries of acceptable human behavior.

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We here at Brave Spirits Theatre are obsessed with Shakespeare. Part of that obsession includes being fascinated with the theatrical environment in which Shakespeare's genius was able to flourish. From the 1580's to the 1630's London's theatre scene was at its height. Plays were written and performed at an astonishing rate. Though only a small percentage of these plays survive, an even smaller percentage are produced on the modern stage (i.e. mostly the ones Shakespeare wrote). Though Shakespeare's ubiquity is deserved, it comes at the price of ignoring the generically complex, polyvocal, collaborative works by other playwrights that early modern audiences flocked to see. Even in a city like DC, where more than eight professional companies are regularly involved in producing Shakespeare, works by Middleton, Kyd, Beaumont and Fletcher, and others go virtually unproduced. When Victoria and I founded Brave Spirits in 2011, we knew that we wanted a company where audiences could seek out the gems of the early modern theatre that have been ignored in the wake of Shakespeare's power. These are the plays you may have read in a college English class or in your own living room, but never once had the chance to see.

We begin with *Arden of Faversham*. Though classical theatres sometimes stage *Arden* as a reading, few have trusted the script enough to fully produce it. You're witnessing the play's first production in the Washington, DC area. Though scholars have argued that Shakespeare may have had a hand in part, or even all, of *Arden of Faversham*, we think the play deserves to be seen whether he did or not. Other playwrights involved may have included Thomas Kyd, Robert Greene, John Lyly, George Peele, and Christopher Marlowe. Regardless of who wrote it, we like the play for its leading female character, a woman who ignores legal and social boundaries in the pursuit of desire; its bumbling comic ruffians, Shakebag and Black Will; and the way it flips from tone to tone, between genre and genre.

Enjoy the show and please join us again for future productions by Shakespeare's contemporaries. And if you have a favorite you'd love to see us stage, by all means, let me know!

-- Charlene V. Smith
charlene@bravespiritstheatre.com

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CAST AND PRODUCTION TEAM

Franklin	Nello DeBlasio
Thomas Arden of Faversham	Robert Leembruggen*
Alice Arden	Victoria Reinsel
Mosby.....	Willem Krumich
Susan / Prentice / Ferryman	Morgan Sendek
Michael	Grant Cloyd
Clarke / Lord Cheyne.....	Rich Montgomery
Dick Greene / Watch.....	Ian Armstrong
Black Will / Watch.....	Teresa Spencer
Shakebag / Watch	Samantha Sheahan
Cheyne's Man / Watch	Curt Gavin

Director.....	Dan Crane
Stage Manager	Boneza Hanchock
Dramaturg	Cassie Ash
Lighting Designer	Chris Curtis
Graphic Design	Jessica Aimone
Publicity Photography	Justin Schneider
Production Photography	Kevin Hollenbeck
BST Board Members	Charlene V. Smith, Victoria Reinsel, Nello DeBlasio, Kelly Elliott, Abigail Isaac Fine, Jim Gagne, and Shelby Sours

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States, appearing under a Special Appearance Contract.

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to *Arden of Faversham*, a delightful little murder-romp by an anonymous fraternity of early modern male playwrights. Wow, I learned an awful lot about women while directing this play. For example, did you know that if a woman is denied an opportunity she will “straight grow outrageous” in its pursuit? If the opportunity is offered without reservation, however, she will probably decline. Hmm, interesting. Also, women are prone to incessant chattering, nagging their husbands until they get their way. Well sure, because you know women, right? Even more dangerous, did you know that some women choose not to control their filthy lust and will attempt the most heinous acts to satisfy their deviant desires? No, really. Gentlemen and ladies, if you do not tame your wicked woman they may murder you and consume the world with their ravenous demonic vagina.

This is, of course, complete and utter bullshit. And yet we hear this sexist language ring with the same glib panache today as it did over four centuries ago. Alice is depicted as a slut, a whore, a bitch, a witch, and a host of other diminishing epithets we use to shame women into submission. Like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Alice's legacy is left to the survivors to expound upon as “simple truth.” And in this context we are encouraged to revel in

the scandal of the lascivious Alice like an *Us Weekly* still moist from the sweaty hands of those of us eager to judge her with our superior morality.

But relax: this is a comedy ... where someone dies. I am certainly not defending what Alice did. I am, however, grateful to have an opportunity to explore how her story and legacy are portrayed. And who doesn't enjoy a juicy scandal? Enjoy!

-- Dan Crane

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

Arden of Faversham offers “a picture of a society where the values of life, and even life itself, have become commodities to be bought and sold.”¹ Thomas Arden himself sets up this interpersonal commerce when he tells Mosby that, while the local Abbey lands were a gift of the crown (“mine / by letters patent from his majesty”), he still needs a mandate for his wife, Alice. When Arden says, “They say you seek to rob me of her love,” he counts Alice among his many possessions. The mandate he needs is not a formal injunction to block third party interest in a real estate dispute, it's to block Mosby's interference in the Ardens' domestic dealings. Both written sources for the play, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Vol. 2, 2nd ed., 1587) and the legal records in the Wardmote Book of Faversham agree that Thomas Arden knew all about Alice and Mosby's affair. Holinshed claims Arden allowed it to continue “because he would not offend her and so lose the benefit which he hoped to gain at some of her friends hands in bearing with her lewdness, which he might have lost if he should have fallen out with her” (cited in White 104). Mosby's lower social status (and smaller bank account) are mentioned so frequently in the play that we cannot shake the idea that Alice's cheating would be more palatable if only she'd chosen someone a bit more ... equal to Thomas. And we can only imagine what Thomas would think about the price of his own life, which Alice values at £10 (about 12% the annual salary of a low-ranking gentleman).

Problematically, neither Alice nor Mosby tries to supplant social norms. They are quite content to use the promise of marriage to Mosby's sister, Susan, to manipulate Arden's servant, Michael, and the local artist/poison dealer into aiding their criminal pursuits. Mosby may not control much public commerce, but the play acknowledges his mastery over Susan's future when he asks, “What, sister, is it Clarke must be the man?” and she responds, “It resteth in your grant.” *Arden of Faversham* never claims to be a feminist telling of an infamous crime, but its inbuilt, gendered inequalities are so skewed that a sympathetic production would be anathema to Brave Spirits' sensibilities. Not only was the historical Arden a cuckold, but he was a wittol, a willing participant in his own shame. The play attempts to make him the portrait of a wronged husband, but his greed and privilege keep smearing the paint.

This production aims to make the play's misogyny farcical – not because it is something to take lightly, but because it leads to absurdly grievous errors in judgment (and because Black Will and Shakebag are two of the most delightfully dangerous villains we've ever

1 *Arden of Faversham*. Ed. Martin White. New Mermaids. London: Ernest Been Ltd., 1982. xxvii.

seen). Alice isn't punished because she is a woman, and therefore inherently evil, she's punished because she chose murder. Dan's direction allows Alice to reclaim herself from commoditization, once given to Thomas, now borrowed (or 'stolen,' depending on the point of view) by Mosby, who can buy herself out of a marriage contract for the low, low price of twenty angels.

Arden, who married rich, who has wealthy and powerful patrons, whose most recent triumph is the gift of sole rights to prime real estate, sees himself as a victim. A local lord plots against him, and his wife cuckolds him with a poorer man. Alice repents at the end of the play because the playwrights were crafting a didactic moral. We have no evidence of her regrets in real life, though surely one's own life is too high a price for such fleeting freedom. The circumstances of extreme and misguided 'solutions' need to be examined, and we hope the production offers you both food for thought *and* the entertainment of a good crime story.

-- Cassie Ash

ANACHRONISM IN SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE

The theatre of Shakespeare's day was not particularly concerned with historical accuracy. Plays set in ancient Rome, for instance, would feature actors wearing contemporary clothing of the late 16th or early 17th century with, perhaps, a nod to the togas and tunics of the era in which the story takes place. Music featured as part of the performance--whether in the play itself, during the act breaks, or even following the show--would, likewise, be contemporary songs (or older lyrics set to those newer tunes) that would be familiar to the audience. Following this tradition, we often employ costumes and music that are from the 20th and 21st centuries while still keeping true to the 16th and 17th century texts.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Ian Armstrong (Dick Greene / Watch) was most recently seen as Lord Byron and Ralph Waldo Emerson in Taffety Punks' *Bloody Poetry* and *Charm* repertory, where he also played Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*. Prior to that he played title roles in WSC Avant Bard's *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *The Miser*. He has also appeared at Arena Stage, Shakespeare Theatre, and Folger Theatre. Ian serves on the boards of Taffety Punk Theatre, Forum Theatre, and the Board of Governors of theatreWashington.

Grant Cloyd (Michael) is delighted to be making his debut with Brave Spirits. Local credits include *BLUE* with Imagination Stage (u/s; performed), *Barrymore* with Rep Stage, *Belleville* with Studio Theater (u/s), *The Tempest* with Annapolis Shakespeare Company, and *Cymbeline* with Chesapeake Shakespeare Company. He has also performed internationally with *Bareback Ink* as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Additionally, he tours multiple one man shows in conjunction with the Jewish Museum of Maryland around the Baltimore region. Grant is a 3rd year MFA in Acting candidate at CUA and holds a BA in Theater from SMCM.

Dan Crane (Director) DIRECTING: Enlightenment Theatre Project: *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline*; Shakespeare Theatre Young Company: *Romeo and Juliet* at Festival Internacional de Teatro Juveniles in Parla, Spain. DC AREA ACTING: Taffety Punk: *Charm*, *Bloody Poetry*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Twelfth Night*, *Oxygen*; Shakespeare Theatre Company: *The Importance of Being Earnest* (U.S.), *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Beaux Stratagem*, *Richard III*; Folger Theatre: *Cyrano* (Helen Hayes Award

Nomination, Outstanding Ensemble), *Hamlet, The Winter's Tale*; Hub Theatre: *Birds of a Feather* (Helen Hayes Award Nomination, Outstanding Ensemble); Theatre J: *The Four of Us*; Baltimore Shakespeare Festival: *Hamlet*. REGIONAL ACTING: Idaho Shakespeare Festival: *Hamlet, Amadeus, Macbeth, The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; Kitchen Theatre (NY): *A Perfect Ganesh*. TRAINING: Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts; Ithaca College: BFA; Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University: MFA.

Nello DeBlasio (Franklin) first appeared with Brave Spirits Theatre in their 2013 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Other local credits include: Faction of Fools, Keegan Theatre, American Century, Quotidian, Project Y, Source Festival, and Folger Theater. Nello received his MFA from the Shakespeare Theatre's Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University. He is proud to be a board member of Brave Spirits Theatre and also serves on the board of the Actors' Center.

Curt Gavin (Lord Cheyne's Man / Watch) is excited to be making his debut in DC with Brave Spirits. He has just moved to the DC area after graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University with a BA in theater and a minor in history. His recent credits include: *The Fool*, a short film released by the VCU Cinema Department, *Finer Noble Gasses* (Staples) at Shafer St. Playhouse, *Dog See's God* (Beethoven) at Haberstick Productions, and *Two Precious Maidens Ridiculed* (Du Croisy) at VCU.

Willem Krumich (Mosby): THEATRE: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Palamon) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Flute) at Brave Spirits; *Tour de Farce* (Peter) at Capital Fringe Festival; *The Lost Colony* (Red Soldier #2) and *Pirates: A Boy At Sea* (Captain McGovern) at Lost Colony; *The Duchess of Malfi* (Ferdinand), *The Ajax Project* (Ajax), *Chandler Tate* (Comic Potential), *3X3* (Sganarelle), and *Don't Dress for Dinner* (George) at Christopher Newport University Theatre. TRAINING: BA in Theatre from Christopher Newport University.

Robert Leembruggen (Thomas Arden) is delighted to be making his debut with Brave Spirits. His most recent performance was at the Keegan Theatre, playing the role of Mr. Kipps in *The Woman in Black*. Other credits include Shakespeare Theater Company: Balthazar/*The Comedy of Errors*; Gonzalo (u/study performed)/*The Tempest*; Rodrigo (u/study performed)/*The Duchess of Malfi*; Julius Caesar (u/study)/*Julius Caesar*. Olney Theatre Centre: La Hire/St. Joan; Carlson/*Of Mice and Men*. Keegan Theatre: Malachy McCourt/*A Couple of Blaguards*; Prospero/*The Tempest*; Common Man/*A Man For All Seasons*; Benjamin Franklin/1776; Big Daddy/*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*; Sancho/*Man of La Mancha*. Washington Stage Guild: Senor Gomez/*The Elder Statesman*; Thomas Huxley/*Darwin in Malibu*. Taffety Punk: Antonio/*Twelfth Night*. TRAINING: Shakespeare Theatre's Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University.

Rich Montgomery (Clarke / Lord Cheyne) is very happy to be working with Brave Spirits and thanks Dan for this opportunity. Rich is a company member at the Keegan Theatre since 1999, performing in many shows and touring Ireland six times. Other performances with: American Century Theatre, Teatro Vista (Chicago), Dallas Children's Theatre, Ohio Light Opera, New Mercury Theatre (Chicago), the Actors Workshop, Chicago Actor's Studio, and many others. He lives in DC with the amazing Sheri Herren and their beloved pit bull Dixie.

Victoria Reinsel (Alice Arden) Brave Spirits Theatre (Associate Artistic Director and Co-founder): *Richard III* (Lady Anne/Rivers/Others), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Julia); Constellation Theatre Company: *Blood Wedding* (The Bride); Taffety Punk: *Much Ado About Nothing* (Margaret), *Love's Labours Lost* (Jacquenetta); American Shakespeare Center: *Much Ado About Nothing* (Hero), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Anne Page/William/Rugby), *Titus Andronicus* (Lavinia), *Henry IV, part 1* (Lady Mortimer/Peto); Folger Theatre: *Richard III* (u/s performed Lady Anne; u/s Elizabeth); Orlando Shakespeare Theatre: *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Imaginary Invalid*; TRAINING: MFA and MLitt in Shakespeare in Performance from Mary Baldwin College in partnership with the American Shakespeare Center. www.victoriareinsel.com

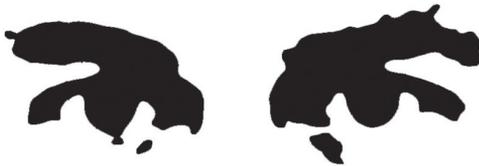
Morgan Sendek (Susan) is excited to make her BST debut! She is a recent graduate of Catholic University's musical theatre program. THEATRE: Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling* (4615 Theater Company), Florence in *Point...Blank...Period!* (2014 Capital Fringe Festival) Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (Catholic University). FILM/TV: Glitter in *The Black Friday Games* (Bard Tales Productions), Commercials for WUSA9 and Ambit. EDUCATION: BM Musical Theatre, Catholic University; London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA). UPCOMING: *Twelfth Night* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in repertory at 4615 Theater Company. www.morgansendek.com

Samantha Sheahan (Shakebag): This is Samantha's first show with Brave Spirits, and she is thrilled to be debuting as Shakebag. Other roles have included Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors* (Arlington Players), Jenna in *Last Call* (The Nameless), and Sarah in *Translations* (Keegan Theatre; Helen Hayes Nomination, Outstanding Ensemble). Samantha is an Assistant Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework® and received her BA in Drama from Kenyon College. She gives thanks, as always, for the gifts of her family and friends.

Teresa Spencer (Black Will) is delighted to be appearing with Brave Spirits for the first time. Her DC area credits include Taffety Punk: *Charm, Bloody Poetry, The Tempest, Titus Andronicus*; Constellation Theatre: *Absolutely {Perhaps}*; Chesapeake Shakespeare: *As You Like It*; Maryland Shakespeare Festival: *As You Like It, Romeo and Juliet, The Taming of the Shrew*; Lean & Hungry: *Romeo and Juliet*; Synetic Family Theater: *Galactika, Histrion: Tartuffe, Dom Juan, The Bald Soprano*. Teresa holds an MFA from the Shakespeare Theatre Co's Academy for Classical Acting at the George Washington University.

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The Bloody Banquet

by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker
directed by Casey Kaleba and Charlene V. Smith
2015 Capital Fringe Festival

This gory tragedy was extremely popular in the early 1600s, remaining in the professional repertoire for three decades. After 1642, however, the play remained unperformed for over three hundred years. A tyrant, Armatrites, catches his wife committing adultery. He murders her lover, has the man's quartered body strung up, and tells his wife that her lover's body shall be her only food. The plot is ripe with horrific elements: usurpation, revenge, and cannibalism. Brave Spirits is proud to be producing the first professional production of *The Bloody Banquet* in the modern era.

The Re-Gendered *Henry IV* Repertory

by William Shakespeare
directed by Kevin Finkelstein
Fall 2015

In William Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, parts 1 & 2, three central themes exist: family, warfare, and honor. In traditional productions, audiences are typically encouraged to explore these themes through three central figures: King Henry, Prince Hal, and Sir John Falstaff. Next season, Brave Spirits will challenge audiences to explore these themes through an almost complete re-gendering of the two plays. This intimate production, performed by an ensemble of some of DC's most talented actresses, will leave audience members second guessing their preconceived notions of gender roles.

The Maid's Tragedy

by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher
directed by Angela K. Pirko
Spring 2016

To celebrate Brave Spirits' fifth year of production, co-founders Victoria Reinsel and Charlene V. Smith return to the stage together in this sexy Jacobean revenge tragedy as two women determined to get what they want in a world ruled by the whims of men. Aspatia (Reinsel) is in love with the young gentlemen Amintor. He breaks their betrothal when the King bids him instead to marry Evadne (Smith). Eager to take his new bride to bed, Amintor is shocked to learn that Evadne is mistress to the King. Amintor joins up with Evadne's brother to plot revenge and the fatalities soon start piling up.

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