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from court theatre's  
CAST partnership

Hamlet

william  
shakespeare

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CLASSICS  
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TEACHERS





The contents of **Classic acts** fall into four broad categories:

1. Information and background on *Hamlet*.
2. Background information on the Globe Theatre.
3. A synopsis of the play.
4. The Play in Production: an insight into the play's transition into a piece of theatre, focusing on Court Theatre's production and the work of the director and the designers.
5. Suggested activities.

**Categories 1 & 2** give background information on the play you are to see and on the playwright.

**Category 3, The Play in Production** gives insight into the process by which a literary text becomes a performance text, the process by which an original and imaginative work of one artist is re-authored—re-imagined—by another artist, the Director, together with her or his collaborators, the dramaturg, the designers and the actors.

Included in **classic acts** are video interviews with Guy Adkins, the actor playing Hamlet, *Hamlet* Costume Designer Joyce Kim Lee, talking about her job, and Court Resident Dramaturg and Production Dramaturg for *Hamlet*, Celise Kalke, giving some background on the play.

**Category 4, Suggested activities**, invites exploration of the themes of the play and creates opportunities for discussion role-play and writing.

These activities encourage the development of an understanding of the work of the theatre artist and of the creative process.



*William Shakespeare*



Celise Kalke is the resident [dramaturg](#) for Court Theatre and the production [dramaturg](#) for *Hamlet*.

**Click on the links below** to view video clips of Celise giving some background to the play *Hamlet*

[Background to the play](#)

[The sources of \*Hamlet\*](#)

[How the script was cut](#)

[How the set came about](#)

[Hamlet and the movies](#)



*Celise Kalke, Court Theatre Dramaturg*



*William Shakespeare*





*Guy Adkins,  
the actor playing Hamlet*

guy adkins

Guy Adkins is playing the leading role of Hamlet in Court Theatre's production. You can watch him talk about the challenges Shakespeare's biggest, and in many ways most challenging, role.

**Click on the link below** to view the interview.

[Guy's thoughts on the play and playing \*Hamlet\*](#)

[Guy talking about preparing to play the role of Hamlet](#)





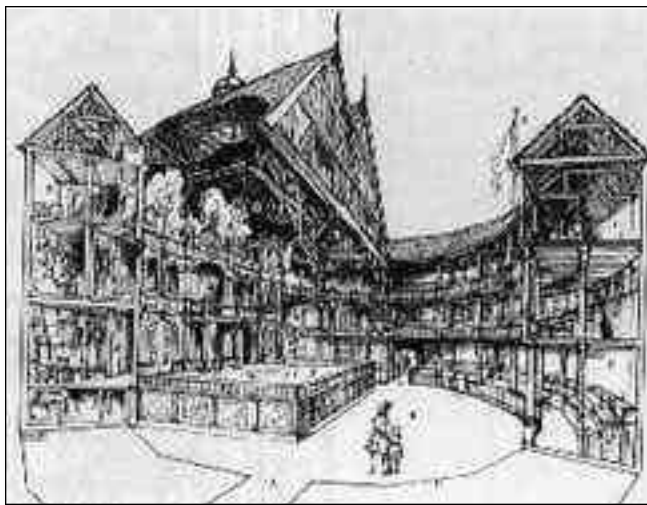
# shakespeare's globe theatre



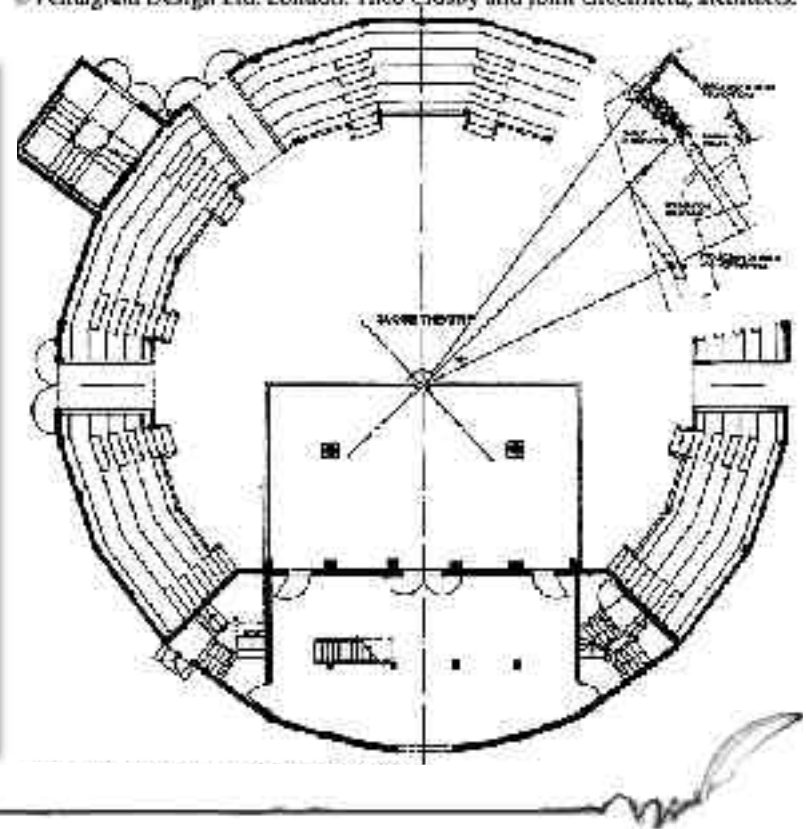
*The exterior of the new Globe Theatre*



*The interior audience galleries*



© Pentagram Design Ltd. London. Theo Crosby and John Greenfield, architects.





## sources of the play

*Taken from Shakespeare A to Z by Charles Boyce*

Shakespeare's basic source for *Hamlet* was the *Ur-Hamlet* (c. 1588), a play on the same subject that is known to have been popular in London in the 1580s but for which no text survives. This work, believed to have been written by Thomas KYD, was apparently derived from a tale in Fracois BELLEFOREST'S collection *Histoires Tragiques* (1580). Although Shakespeare knew Belleforest's work, he adopted a central element of *Hamlet*, the Ghost, from the *Ur-Hamlet*, and this fact, along with the theatrical success of the lost work, suggests that it was Shakespeare's chief source.

Belleforest retold a story from a 12th-century Latin work, the *Historiae Danicae*, by SAXO GRAMMATICUS, first published in 1514. Saxo provides the earliest complete account of a legendary tale—9th-century fragments are known from the Icelandic sagas—of Amleth, a Danish nobleman who took revenge after his uncle killed his father and married his mother. The name Amleth, from Old Norse, means 'dim-witted' or 'brutish', in reference to his stratagem of feigning madness after his father's murder. Many other elements of *Hamlet*—including a dramatic encounter between Amleth and his mother, during which he kills a spy; his love affair with a beautiful woman; his exile to England and his escape by replacing the order for his execution with one condemning his escorts—are present in Saxo's account.

Shakespeare doubtless found much of this in the *Ur-Hamlet*, but this work, to judge by its probable companion piece, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1588—1589), lacked *Hamlet*'s dramatic development and thematic unity; Shakespeare may have found hints of a unified point of view in Belleforest's version. In particular, the French

writer develops the contrast between the good king who is murdered and his evil, incestuous killer, a comparison that is prominent in *Hamlet*'s thoughts.

Many scholars believe that *The Spanish Tragedy*, also a revenge play, was itself a source for numerous elements in *Hamlet*. For instance, Kyd's play has a procrastinating protagonist who berates himself for talking instead of acting and who dies as he achieves his revenge; it also features a play within a play, a heroine whose love is opposed by her family, and another woman who becomes insane and commits suicide. However, some commentators feel that Kyd took at least some of these elements from the *Ur-Hamlet*, whether he wrote it or not, and that Shakespeare could have done so as well.

Other sources contributed to *Hamlet* in minor ways. A play that provokes a confession of guilt was a well-established literary motif, but Shakespeare's company had recently staged an anonymous drama, *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), in which it is used, so this work was probably the immediate stimulus for *Hamlet*'s 'Mousetrap' plot.

The physician Timothy BRIGHT'S *A Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) may have influenced Shakespeare's portrayal of *Hamlet*'s depression. Thomas NASHE'S widely popular pamphlet, *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* (1592), influenced several passages of the play, especially *Hamlet*'s diatribe on drunkenness in 1.4.16—38. Some of *Hamlet*'s remarks on graves and death in 5.1 echo a popular religious work, *Of Prayer and Meditation*, by the Spanish mystic Luis de GRANADA, which Shakespeare probably read in the translation by Richard HOPKINS. *The Counsellor* (1598), an anonymous translation of a volume on good government by the tamed Polish diplomat Laurentius GOSLICIUS is echoed in several passages, most notably *Hamlet*'s speech beginning, 'What a piece of work is man' (2.2.303).



PLUTARCH'S *Lives*, always one of Shakespeare's favourite sources, mentions a Greek tyrant, famed for many cold-blooded murders, who wept at a recital of HECUBA'S woes, and this may have inspired the recitation by the First Player in 2.2. However, the playwright also knew the tale of Hecuba from VIRGIL'S *Aeneid*, where it first appears, and from *The Tragedy of Dido* (1594), a play by Nashe and Christopher MARLOWE (1).

Shakespeare could also have read a retelling of Plutarch's Hecuba anecdote in the Essays of Michel de MONTAIGNE, either in French (publ. between 1580 and 1595) or in a manuscript of John FLORIO's translation, (publ. 1603). Echoes of Montaigne occur in several key passages—

e.g., both Hamlet and the French essayist liken death to a sleep and to a 'consummation' (3.1.63).

Some scholars believe that an incident of 1577 at the court of Marguerite de Valois, a French princess married

to the King of Navarre, influenced Shakespeare's conception of Ophelia's death. A young woman of the court was reported to have died of love for a young nobleman; he was absent from the court at the time and learned of her death only when he accidentally encountered the funeral procession upon his return. This event was widely reported in England at the time, due to the English support of

the Protestant forces, led by Navarre, in the French Wars of Religion. The same event is thought to be referred to in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

A real event also inspired the murder of Hamlet's father by pouring poison in his ear. In 1538 the Duke of Urbino, one of the leading military and political figures of day, died. His barber-surgeon confessed that he had killed the duke by putting a lotion in his ears, having been hired to do so by one Luigi Conzaga. Shakespeare gave the name of the plotter to

the victim (as Gonzago [3.2.233]), but the combination of his name and the unusual method of poisoning point to this actual crime as the stimulus to the playwright's fictional one, although the *Ur-Hamlet* may have used it first.



Scene Design for Hamlet by the famous designer Gordon Craig

## the history of the play text

*Taken from Shakespeare A to Z by Charles Boyce*

Hamlet was probably written in late 1599 or early 1600, though possibly a year later. It followed Julius Caesar—performed in September 1599—for it echoes Caesar in 1.1.116-118 and alludes to it in 3.2.102—105, and it probably preceded John MARSTON's play Antonio's Revenge, staged in late 1600, which recalls Hamlet in many places, indicating that Shakespeare's play had been performed by no later than the autumn of 1600.

However, one passage in Hamlet—2.2.336-358, describing the competition of the PLAYERS with troupe of child actors—clearly refers to THE WAR OF THE THEATRES, a rivalry among acting companies that dominated the London theatre in the spring of 1600. If Hamlet was written in 1600, then this passage might have been inserted later. Some scholars, however, hold that Hamlet was written in its entirety in early 1601 and that either Antonio's Revenge was Shakespeare 5 source rather than the other way around or both Marston and Shakespeare took their common materials from the Ur-Hamlet.

Hamlet was first published in 1603 by Nicholas LING and John TRUNDELL in a QUARTO edition (known as Q1) printed by Valentine SIMMES. Q1 is a BAD QUARTO, a mangled version of the text, assembled from the memories of actors who had performed in the play. It was supplanted by Q2 (1604, with some copies dated 1605), printed by John ROBERTS and published by him and Ling. A sound text, Q2 is believed to have been printed from Shakespeare's own manuscript, or FOUL PAPERS, with occasional reference to Q1 where the manuscript was unclear. However, two substantial passages

appear to have been deliberately cut from Q2: Hamlet's reflections on Denmark as a prison (2.2. 239—269), perhaps thought offensive to the Danish wife of England's new king, JAMES I; and the passage on child actors mentioned above, which may have been cut because James patronized a CHILDREN'S COMPANY or perhaps simply because it was out of date by 1604. In 1607 Ling sold his rights to the play to John SMETHWICK, who published three further quartos, Q3 (1611), Q4 (1622), and Q5 (1637), each of which was printed from its predecessor.

Hamlet was published in the FIRST FOLIO edition of Shakespeare's plays (1623). This text, known as F, derives from Q2 but differs from it significantly. It corrects many small errors and improves on Q2's stage directions, but it also contains its own, more numerous, omissions and errors. F 'modernises' words the editors or printers thought old-fashioned, and some bits of dialogue apparently derive from actors' ad libs, such as a cry of Oh Vengeance!' in the middle of Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of 2.2. More important, F provides the significant passages cut from Q2. It is thought that the printers of F followed both Q2—probably a copy that had been annotated for production use—and a FAIR COPY, a transcription of Shakespeare's manuscript, with errors and alterations made by a scribe but including the missing material.

Modern editions rely on Q2 because it is plainly closest to Shakespeare's own manuscript, but they turn to F for its restored cuts and for frequent minor improvements. Rarely, Q1 provides a correction of an obvious error in the other two texts or a clarification in stage directions.



# performance history of hamlet

Taken from *Shakespeare A to Z* by Charles Boyce



*"Alas, poor Yorick..."  
Hamlet & the Gravedigger*

From the outset, Hamlet has been recognized as one of the greatest works of the English stage, and it has remained the most widely produced of Shakespeare's plays (though most productions—probably including the original one—have used an abridged text). Most leading actors—and

some actresses—of every generation have played the title part. The play has also been frequently performed in other languages.

The first production was that of the CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN in 1600 or 1601, referred to in the registration of the play with the STATIONERS' COMPANY in 1602. Contemporary references, along with many echoes of the play in the work of other playwrights, testify to its early popularity. Richard BURBAGE was the first Hamlet; after his death in

1619 the role was taken, to great acclaim, by Joseph TAYLOR. A tradition first recorded by Nicholas ROWE in 1709 reports that Shakespeare played the Ghost in the original production.

'The Grave-Makers', an adaptation of 5.1 of Hamlet, was performed as a DROLL during the period of revolutionary government in England (1642—1660), when the theatres were legally closed. After the restoration of the monarchy, Hamlet was revived by William DAVENANT, though with a much abridged text, in a 1661 production starring Thomas BETTERTON, who was celebrated in the role for the rest of the century.

David GARRICK played Hamlet many times between 1734 and his retirement in 1776. Susannah Maria CIBBEE (2), who often played opposite him, was regarded as the best Ophelia of the day. Garrick's production of 1772 was one of the most severely altered, and is still notorious for its elimination of much of Act 5.

Beginning in 1783, John Philip KEMBLE, regarded as one of the greatest Hamlets, played the part often, sometimes opposite his sister, Sarah SIDDONS, as Ophelia.



*Edwin Booth as Hamlet*



Siddons herself was the first of many women to play Hamlet, taking the role in 1775. Female Hamlets were most popular in the late 18th and 19th centuries; among the best known were Kitty CLIVE, Charlotte CUSHMAN, Julia GLOVER, and Sarah BERNHARDT. In the 20th century Judith ANDERSON (at the age of 73) and Eva Le Gallienne, among others, have also played the prince.



F. R. BENSON staged Shakespeare's complete text in 1900, confirming that the resulting four- to five-hour performance was feasible. Other noteworthy 20th-century Hamlets have included the controversial 1925 Barry JACKSON (1) production, which

introduced modern dress to the Shakespearean stage; a New York staging by Margaret WEBSTER; starring Maurice EVANS (1939); and Joseph PAPP'S productions of 1972 and 1987, starring Stacy Keach and Kevin Kline respectively. Several 20th-century actors are especially well known for their portrayals of Hamlet, including John BARRYMORE, John GIELGUD, and Laurence OLIVIER.



*Adrian Lester as Hamlet in British director Peter Brook's production of Hamlet which toured America last year*

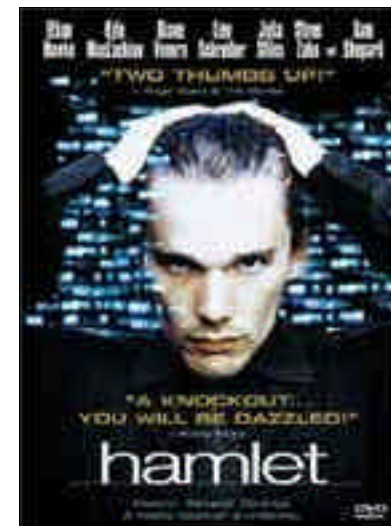
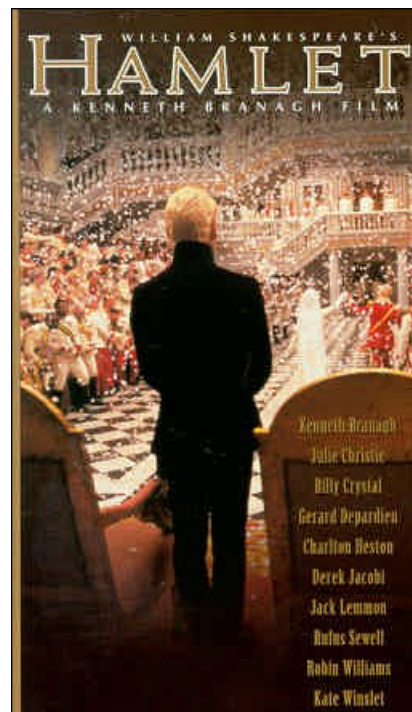
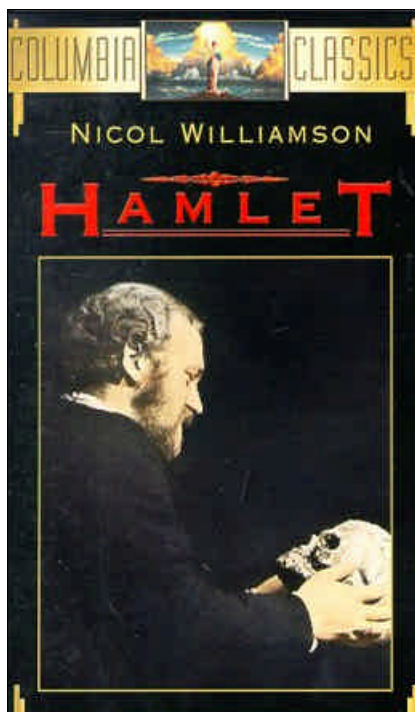


The Internet Movie Database — <http://uk.imdb.com/>— lists over 80 film and TV versions of *Hamlet*, far more than any other Shakespeare play—since 1900, when Sarah Bernhardt played the prince in a silent movie. Among the best-known films are Olivier's heavily abridged version of 1948, with music by William WALTON; the Russian Grigori ROZINTSEV'S epic presentation of a prose translation by Boris Pasternak (1964); and the 1969 film by Tony Richardson (b. 1928), with Nicol WILLIAMSON. *Hamlet* has also been presented on television five times.



Check out the following web-site for lots of information on Film versions of *Hamlet*

<http://hamlet.emulous.com/>



for more images from *Hamlet* movies, [click here](#)

## what happens in the play

*Taken from Shakespeare A to Z by Charles Boyce*

### Act 1, Scene I

On the castle wall in ELSINORE, a sentry, BARNARDO, replaces FRANCISCO on guard and is joined by HORATIO and MARCELLUS. Barnardo and Marcellus tell of a supernatural being they have seen. The GHOST of the late King of DENMARK silently appears and withdraws. The three agree that this visitation seems especially ominous in view of an impending war with Norway. The Ghost re-enters but disappears again when a cock crows. Horatio decides that they should tell Prince HAMLET of the appearance of his father's spirit

### Act 1, Scene 2

Claudius, the KING of Denmark, speaks of the recent death of the late king, his brother, and of his marriage to QUEEN Gertrude, his brother's widow and Hamlet's mother. He also tells of an invasion threat from young Prince FORTINBRAS of Norway, who is acting without the knowledge of his uncle, the Norwegian king. The King therefore sends CORNELIUS and VOLTEMAND with a letter to the King of Norway advocating restraint. LAERTES, the son of the King's adviser POLONIUS, requests permission to return to his studies in France, which the King grants. The King and Queen urge Hamlet to cease mourning his father's death. The King denies Hamlet permission to return to his own studies at Wittenberg; the Queen adds her wish that he stay in Denmark, and Hamlet agrees to do so. The monarchs and their retinue depart. Hamlet remains and muses mournfully on his mother's hasty and incestuous marriage. Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo appear and tell Hamlet about the Ghost. With great excitement, he arranges to meet them on the castle wall that night.

### Act 1, Scene 3

Laertes, leaving for France, warns his sister, OPHELIA, about Hamlet's affection for her, which he says cannot be permanent in view of the prince's royal status. Polonius arrives and gives Laertes moralizing advice on his conduct abroad. Laertes departs with a last word to Ophelia about Hamlet; this triggers a diatribe from Polonius about the suspect morals of young men, and he forbids Ophelia to see the prince.

### Act 1, Scene 4

The Ghost appears to Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus, and Hamlet speaks to it. It beckons, and Hamlet follows.

### Act I, Scene 5

The Ghost confirms that it is the spirit of Hamlet's father. It declares that the prince must avenge his murder: the King had poured poison in his ear. The Ghost departs, and Hamlet vows to carry out its wishes. Horatio and Marcellus appear, and Hamlet swears them to secrecy—about the Ghost and about his own intention to feign madness—as the Ghost's disembodied voice demands their oaths.

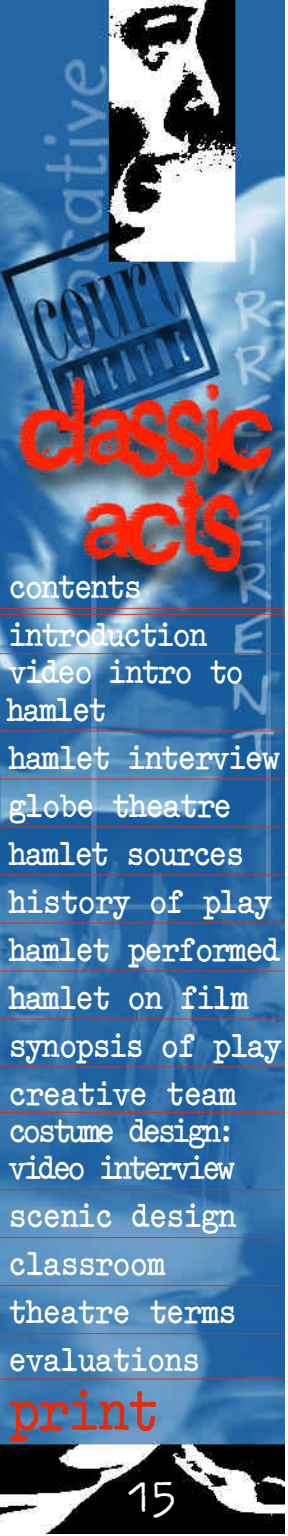
### Act 2, Scene 1

Polonius sends his servant REYNALDO to spy on Laertes in Paris. Ophelia reports that Hamlet has come to her and behaved as if he were insane. Polonius concludes that his separation of Ophelia and Hamlet has driven the prince mad, and he decides to inform the King of this.

### Act 2, Scene 2

The King and Queen welcome ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN, fellow students of Hamlet, who have been summoned in the hope that the prince will confide in them. They agree to spy on their friend. Voltemand and





Cornelius arrive to report that the King of Norway has agreed to redirect Fortinbras' invasion to Poland. Polonius then declares—with comical tediousness—that Hamlet is lovesick, producing a love letter from the prince that he has confiscated from Ophelia. He offers to arrange for the King to eavesdrop on an encounter between Ophelia and Hamlet. Hamlet appears; Polonius advises the King and Queen to leave, and he approaches the prince alone. Hamlet answers him with nonsensical remarks and absurd insults. Polonius interprets these as symptoms of madness and departs, as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter. Hamlet greets them with more wild talk, and he badgers them into admitting that they have been sent to observe him. PLAYERS from the city arrive, and Hamlet welcomes them enthusiastically, asking the FIRST PLAYER to recite a dramatic monologue describing an episode of revenge from the TROJAN WAR. Hamlet requests that the Players perform THE MURDER OF GONZAGO before the court that night, inserting lines that he will compose. He dismisses the actors and the courtiers and soliloquizes on his delay in avenging the Ghost. He suspects that the spirit may have lied; he will have the Players enact a killing similar to his father's murder, and if Claudius responds guiltily, he will know that what the Ghost has spoke is the truth.

### Act 3, Scene 1

Polonius instructs Ophelia to meet Hamlet while he and the King eavesdrop. The two men hide themselves as Hamlet approaches, meditating on the value of life, and Ophelia greets him. He passionately rejects her with a wild diatribe against women. He leaves her grieving for his apparent madness. The King tells Polonius that he has decided to send Hamlet on a mission to England, accompanied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Polonius suggests further surveillance in the meantime, proposing that his mother summon Hamlet after the performance by the Players; he, Polonius, will spy on their conversation.

### Act 3, Scene 2

Hamlet lectures the Players on acting, saying that overacting and improvisation are distractions from a play's purposes. The court assembles, and the Players perform an introductory DUMB SHOW, in which a murderer kills a king by pouring poison in his ear as he sleeps. He then takes the king's crown and exits with the king's wife. The PLAYER KING and PLAYER QUEEN then speak; she asserts that she will never remarry if he dies, but he insists that she will. He then rests, falling asleep. Another Player, in the part of LUCIANUS, speaks darkly of the evil powers of poison and pours a potion in the ear of the PLAYER KING. The real King, distressed, rises and leaves in anger. Hamlet exults in the success of his plan. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and then Polonius, deliver the Queen's summons to Hamlet, and he agrees to go to her, but not before ridiculing them. He prepares himself to meet his mother, feeling great anger but reminding himself not to use violence against her.

### Act 3, Scene 3

Polonius tells the King that Hamlet is on his way to the Queen's chamber, where he, Polonius, will spy on their meeting. He goes, and the King soliloquizes about his murder of his brother. He says that he has been unable to pray for forgiveness because he is conscious that he is still enjoying the fruits of his crime—his brother's kingdom and his widow. He tries again to pray; Hamlet enters, sees the King on his knees, and contemplates killing him on the spot. He reflects, however, that, if the King dies while at prayer, he will probably go to heaven and the revenge will be incomplete. He decides instead to wait until he finds the King engaged in some sin, however petty, and then kill him, ensuring that his soul will go to hell.

## Act 3, Scene 4

Polonius hides behind a curtain in the Queen's chamber. Hamlet arrives; he attempts to make his mother sit down, and she cries for help. Polonius cries out also, and Hamlet stabs him through the drapery, killing him. After expressing regret that his victim was not the King, Hamlet condemns his mother's behavior. He compares the virtues of his father to the vices of his uncle; the distraught Queen's cries for mercy only enrage him more. The Ghost appears. The Queen, unaware of its presence, thinks Hamlet is mad as he speaks with the spirit. The Ghost reminds Hamlet of the vengeance he must exact, urges pity on the Queen, and departs. Less violently than before, Hamlet urges his mother to confess her sins and refuse to have sex with the King. He leaves, dragging the body of Polonius with him.

## Act 4, Scene 1

The Queen tells the King that Hamlet has killed Polonius. The King sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to recover the body:

## Act 4, Scene 2

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern confront Hamlet. He mocks them, refusing to tell them where the body is, but he goes with them to the King.

## Act 4, Scene 3

The King tells his LORDS that Hamlet is dangerous, yet, because of the prince's popularity, his exile to England must seem routine. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern return with Hamlet under guard. Hamlet expounds humorously on corpses before revealing where he has put Polonius' body. The King tells Hamlet that he is being sent to England immediately for his own safety. The King's

entourage escorts Hamlet to the boat, leaving the King alone to muse on his plot: he is sending letters to the English that threaten war unless they kill Hamlet immediately.

## Act 4, Scene 4

Hamlet, accompanied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, encounters a CAPTAIN from Fortinbras' army, on its way to Poland. The Captain speaks of Fortinbras' war as a fight over a small, insignificant piece of territory. Hamlet compares himself, unable to avenge his father's death, with the 20,000 men who will fight and die for an inconsequential goal. He vows that in the future, he will value only bloody thoughts.

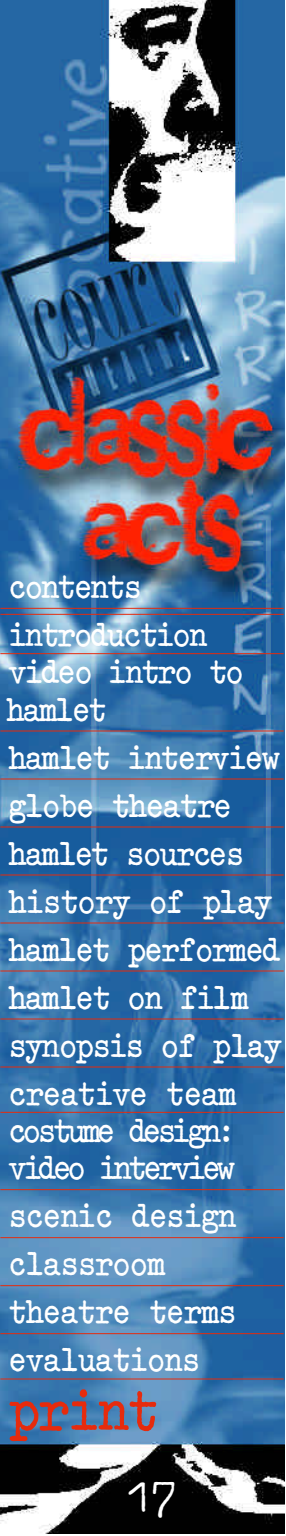
## Act 4, Scene 5

A GENTLEMAN tells the Queen that Ophelia is insane, rambling wildly in senseless speeches that yet seem to convey some unhappy truth. Ophelia enters, singing a song about a dead lover. The King arrives, and Ophelia sings of seduction and betrayal. She leaves, speaking distractedly about a burial. A MESSENGER appears with the news that Laertes has raised a rebellion and is approaching the castle. Laertes and several FOLLOWERS break down the door and enter. He demands vengeance for his father's death, and the King promises that he shall have it. Ophelia returns, singing about a funeral, and distributes flowers to the King, the Queen, and Laertes. She sings again, about an old man's death, and departs. The King takes Laertes away to plot revenge on Hamlet.

## Act 4, Scene 6

A SAILOR brings Horatio a letter from Hamlet. It tells of his capture by pirates who have agreed to release him; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern continue to sail to England. Horatio goes with the sailor to meet Hamlet.





## Act 4, Scene 7

The King tells Laertes that he cannot act directly against Hamlet, out of consideration for the Queen and because of the prince's popularity. The King proposes a plot: they shall arrange a fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes, in which Hamlet will use a blunted sword intended for sport while Laertes shall secretly have a sharp sword. Laertes agrees and adds that he has a powerful poison that he will apply to his sword point. The King further suggests a poisoned glass of wine to be given Hamlet when the sport has made him thirsty. The Queen appears with the news that Ophelia has drowned, and Laertes collapses in tears.

## Act 5, Scene 1

A GRAVE-DIGGER who is a CLOWN speaks with his friend, the OTHER clown, about Ophelia, who has been granted Christian burial although possibly a suicide. He comically misconstrues the law on suicide and jokes about grave-digging. Hamlet and Horatio arrive, and Hamlet meditates on death's leveling of the Wealthy and ambitious. He talks with the Grave-digger, who displays a skull that had belonged to YORICK, a court jester whom Hamlet had known. The prince reflects on the inevitability of death. Ophelia's funeral procession arrives, accompanied by Laertes and the King and Queen; the PRIEST declares her death a suicide. When Hamlet realizes whose funeral he is witnessing, he rushes forth and tries to fight Laertes, challenging his position as chief mourner. Restrained, he departs in a rage. The King assures Laertes that he will get his revenge.

## Act 5, Scene 2

Hamlet tells Horatio how he rewrote the King's letter arranging his death, substituting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's names for his own. He assumes that the two courtiers were killed, but he feels no remorse, since they were schemers. OSRIC, an obsequious and mannered courtier, arrives with the King's request that Hamlet fence with Laertes; the King has wagered that Hamlet can win. Hamlet mocks Osric before sending word that he will fight. He tells Horatio that the proposed match makes him uneasy but says that he is prepared to die. The King and Queen, a group of courtiers, and Laertes arrive for the match. The King pours wine to toast Hamlet's first successful round, and he places a pearl—a congratulatory token, he says—in Hamlet's cup. Hamlet and Laertes fence, but after his first victory Hamlet postpones refreshment and resumes the match. The Queen drinks from his cup, although the King tries to stop her. Laertes wounds Hamlet with the poisoned sword, the two fighters scuffle and accidentally exchange swords, and Hamlet wounds Laertes. The Queen falls, exclaims that she is poisoned, and dies. Laertes, himself poisoned by the exchanged sword, reveals the King's plot. Hamlet Wounds the King with the sword and then forces him to drink the poisoned wine. Hamlet and Laertes forgive each other, and Laertes dies. Horatio starts to drink the poisoned wine, but Hamlet demands that he remain alive to tell his side of the story. Osric announces the return of Fortinbras from Poland; Hamlet declares Fortinbras his successor and dies. Fortinbras arrives and takes command, ordering a stately funeral for Hamlet.



## The Director

“The most important thing a director can do for an actor is to awaken the actor’s intuition and assure the intuition that it is going to be witnessed and used.”

“Essentially an actor says, ‘I will trust the director to function in the capacity of my critical brain while I give my intuitive brain full opportunity to express. I will rely on the director to keep me from looking foolish.’”

William Ball

The Director is similar to the captain or coach of a team of talented individuals, all of whom contribute a great deal to a production, and without whom it could never take place. Like a coach, the Director’s job is to get the best out of every individual. She or he will decide on the general game plan and then work with the team to make this vision a reality.



For one of the most insightful and easily read books on directing read William Ball’s *A Sense of Direction: Some Observations of the Art of Directing*. Published by Drama Book Publishers, New York. ISBN 0-89676-082-0

Directors differ widely in their styles as do coaches, but the Director has the ultimate responsibility for determining what happens on stage. Some directors, such as Robert Wilson or Julie Taymor (*The Lion King* or the movie *Titus*), are more particularly visually oriented and have a strong sense of what the production is to look like. They then work with their designers to bring those ideas to the stage. Other directors tend to focus more exclusively on the script and the actors; they will give their designers more general guidance by talking about a mood or tone for each scene and then rely on their designers to originate a larger part of the design ideas.

## The Scenic Designer

The scenic designer is responsible for envisioning the set, the setting, the place where the action of the play takes place. They may re-create a realistic world, such as a 7-Eleven convenience store, as for Eric Bogosian’s *SubUrbia*, or it may be a very abstract unreal world.

The Scenic designer often begins her or his design process by looking at photographs or paintings. He or she will then produce a series of sketches using pencil or water colors for example. More and more designers are turning to computers and create their sketches in applications such as Photoshop.

In most cases scenic designers will then build a scale model of the set.

Scenic designs then have to draw up plans similar to those created by architects. These plans give the *precise* dimensions for the set, from which the set builders work.



## The Costume Designer

The Costume Designer creates the designs for the clothes the actors wear. The designer considers the period of the play, the time in history that the events take place, the character and role in society (Queen, servant, doctor etc.) of the person and whether or not the design team's vision of the production is literal—trying to make everything in the production look as close to the real world as he or she can—or more abstract, metaphorical.

It is possible to mount a production of *Hamlet*, of course, with all the actors in period dress, or with everyone in black polo neck shirts, black pants and black shoes.

The Costume Designer may decide to choose to make subtle choices about the costume design, such as placing people from a specific group in clothes whose colors are drawn from the same color palette.

The Costume Designer will begin by doing a good deal of historical research (if the play is not a contemporary one) and will then produce a series of preliminary sketches. These will be shown to the Director and the rest of the design team and discussed. From this point on the Costume Designer will produce color renderings and will find samples of actual fabric for each costume.

## The Sound Designer

The Sound Designer is responsible for what can be the most subtle yet powerful element of the design of a production. As an audience we can be very aware of sound effects such as thunder or a gun shot, but much of the Sound Designer's work goes almost, if not completely, unnoticed. Sound effects and music which help establish a

location or a mood can affect us on an almost subliminal level. Even without a set at all, the right soundscape can help our imaginations create a clear sense of where the action is set. Some sound cues are required by the script, while others are decided upon by the sound designer and the Director where they want to add to what is suggested in the written script.

Sounds can range from the wholly naturalistic to effects that are abstract. The music used may be taken from the period of the play, or from another period—sometimes written especially for the production—but which is intended to create an atmosphere or convey a mood.

## The Dramaturg

The Dramaturg is the person responsible for helping the director interpret the play, and for coordinating and doing the research needed to understand the play. The Dramaturg is a member of the Creative team, and also sometimes works closely with the designers as they do their research. The Dramaturg is also responsible for editing the text of the play - comparing different editions and/or deciding on different translations. Finally, the Dramaturg is responsible for writing the program notes and any other articles about the play (including magazine articles) that will be distributed to the audience.

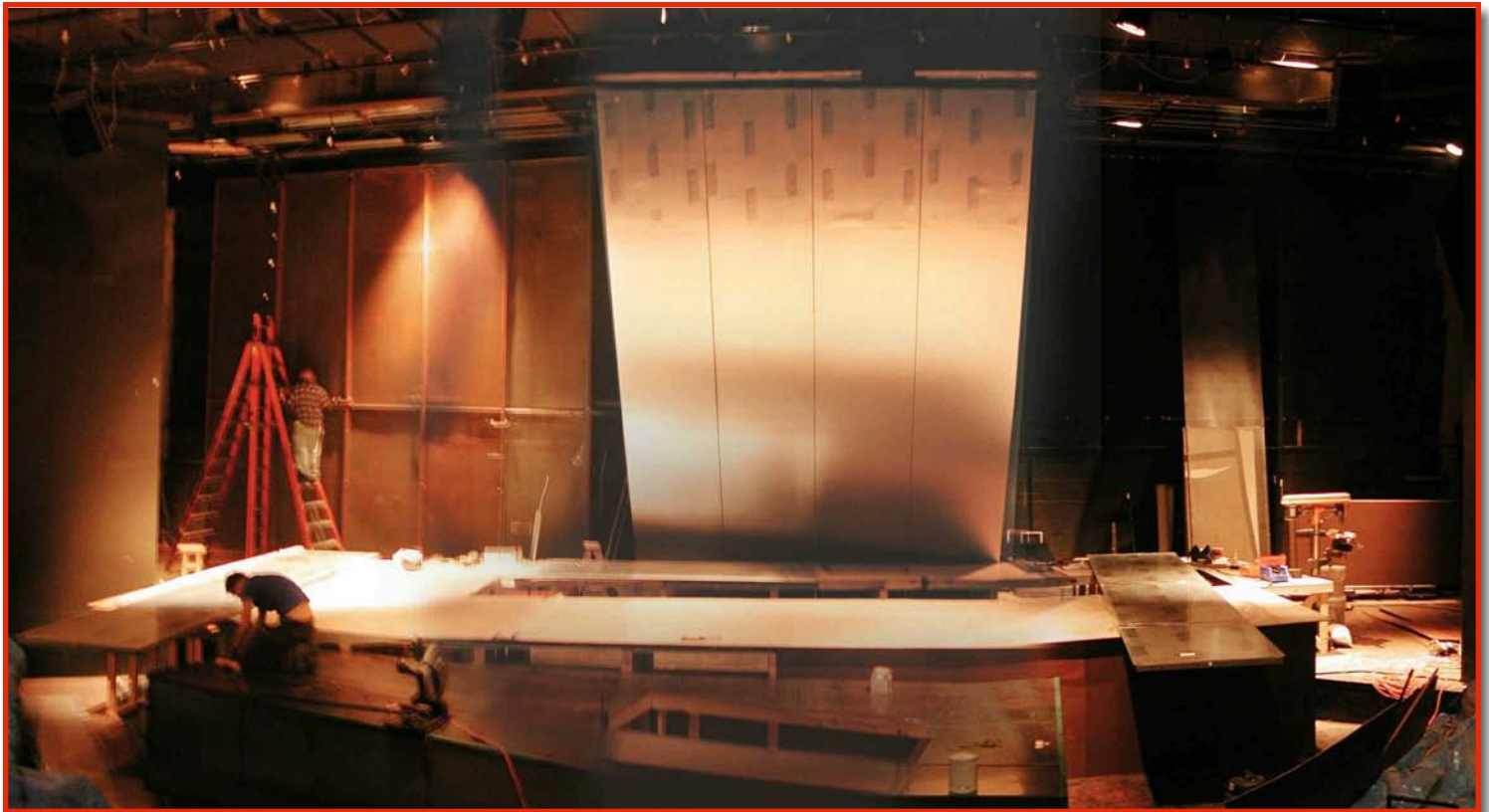
costume design for hamlet



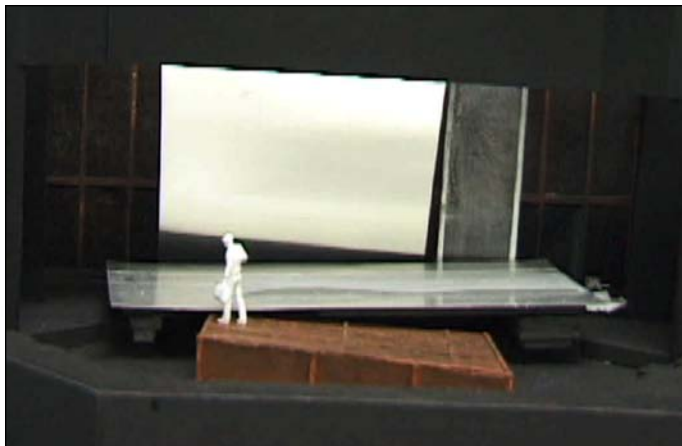
Click [HERE](#) to watch costume designer Joyce Kim Lee introduce the ideas behind the costume designs for Hamlet, THEN click on the drawings of each character to see them in close-up and hear Joyce talk in detail about them.



set design for hamlet



*The set for Hamlet, designed by Narelle Sissons, under construction*



*The set model for Hamlet*



*The interior of the new Globe Theatre in London*

1. If you were the [Director](#) of a production of *Hamlet*, which well known film and TV actors would you cast in each role? Think in detail of the things that would shape your choices.
2. If you have watched a film version of *Hamlet*, compare the filmed production with the production you have seen at Court Theatre.  
  
How did the different media dictate different approaches to the play?  
  
How did the actors performances differ? Did they create very contrasting views of the same character?  
  
How did the design elements of the film and stage versions differ? Consider the costume, set and lighting designs.

3. You are the [Costume Designer](#) of a production of *Hamlet*. Using magazines, or photocopies from books, find pictures which illustrate the costumes you would design for the major characters in the play.

You may need to select several pictures for each character to show different aspects of the costume design, or to show the character at different points in the play

4. As the [Director](#) of the play, what are the important ideas, themes and relationships you would seek to develop in the production through your guidance of your designers and actors?.

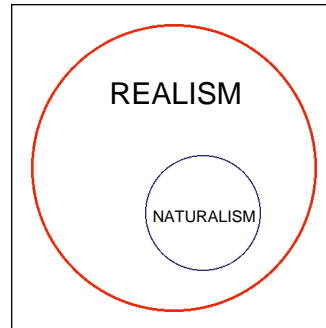


## Realism, Naturalism and beyond.

The concepts of REALISM and NATURALISM have specific meanings when related to the theatre, but over the years they have tended to become virtually synonymous and are often used interchangeably. They tend to be linked together in opposition to the notions of expressionism or symbolism.

### Realism

Realism is generally considered a broad umbrella of which Naturalism is part. Although Shakespeare talks of “holding a mirror up to nature”, and there are many elements of Shakespeare’s writing that may be said to be realistic, REALISM as a movement emerged between 1830 and 1880.



Realism aims to present an objective view of human psychology and social reality. It does not aim to give us a photographic reproduction of reality—to put reality itself onstage. It aims to give the audience the *illusion* of reality.

Its dialogues, what the characters say to each other, “are drawn from the speech patterns of a period or of a social or occupational group. The acting makes the text (what the actors say) appear natural, downplaying the literary or poetical effects by stressing the spontaneous and psychological aspects of the interaction between the characters.” (*Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*)

In other words, even though the playwright will have spent many hours carefully writing the actors speeches and may have consciously included rhetorical devices such as rhythm, alliteration, parallelism or repetition, the actors’ job is to downplay these attempts to make the language engaging and to emphasis the *apparent* REALISM of the scene.

Well known realistic playwrights are Ibsen, Shaw or in the modern era, David Mamet. Realism was the basis of the work of the great acting teacher Stanislavsky.

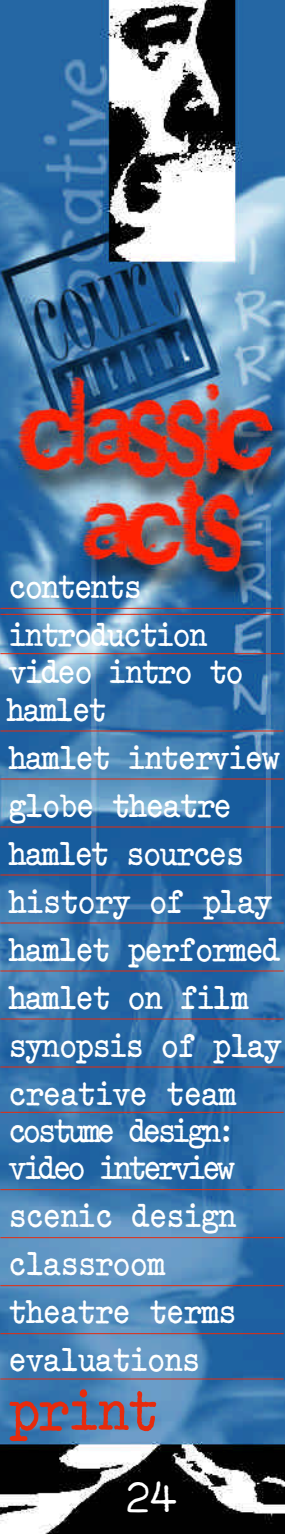
### Naturalism

“Historically, NATURALISM is an artistic movement that, around 1880-1890, advocated a total reproduction of...reality, stressing the material aspects of human existence.” (*Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*) NATURALISM aimed to use the rigorous methodology of scientific research to observe and analyse society.

The first notable exponent of NATURALISM in literature was French novelist and playwright Emile Zola. His novel *Therese Raquin*, which he himself then adapted into a play, is one of the best known examples of NATURALISM in literature. Zola believed that nothing should be on stage that did not appear in nature. In the 1880’s at the Théâtre Libre in Paris, Antonin Antoine used bloody quarters of beef and live chickens onstage.

NATURALISM aimed to shatter the world of illusion onstage.

As an artistic movement it was short lived, because short of observing real people in ‘real’ situations, *all* that is placed onstage and watched by an audience is to a degree artificial and relies on creating a believable illusion.



In Roman times sea-battles were staged on lakes or in flooded amphitheatres . It was thought to be slaves who manned the boats and who fought in these ‘mock’ sea battles, know as *naumachia*. The participants actually died fighting for the entertainment of others. In 52 AD 19,000 men fought on Fucine Lake, east of Rome. Many perished.

Clearly such naturalism is not widely accepted these days, though we are still fascinated by extreme drama in life. We watch “real” court cases on TV; we follow “real” police officers as they chase and engage with “real” villains; we watch “real” people on remote islands.

## Symbolism

Most artistic movements begin as a reaction against what has gone before. This seems to be true in every age. SYMBOLISM began as an opposition to naturalism. It began in Paris in the early 1890's. “The essential of symbolism was the abandonment of the appearances of life in favor of its spirit, symbolically represented and in favor of a more *poetic* form of drama.” (*The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre*)

## Symbol

“A symbol is something which represents something else (often an idea or a quality) by analogy or association. Thus ‘white’, ‘lion’, and ‘rose’ commonly symbolize or represent innocence, courage or beauty. Such symbols exist by convention and tradition. A serpent may stand for evil or wisdom according to different conventions. Writers use these conventional symbols, but also invent and create symbols of their own.” (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

In literature and thus in drama, symbols may take the form of similes and metaphors. The theatrical production of a play adds the possibility for visual and auditory symbols.

## Stylization

A way of presenting a play or theatrical production that “represents reality in a simplified way, stripped to its essential features, eliminating excess detail.” (*Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*)

Onstage actors don’t die or (usually) eat a full meal. The actor replaces the real act with a *stylized* representation of the act. We are not troubled to even see actors eating from an empty plate—or travelling in a non-existent boat—we accept these things as *signifying*—standing for—the real act by virtue of a *convention*—a rule, or set of rules some of which we already come to the theatre with, because they are part of our culture (we know that anyone who dies in a play will be back for the curtain call), or because the rules are worked out during the performance between the actors and the audience. We can come to understand and accept that actors walking across a certain area of the stage in a certain manner are in actual fact “in a boat”.

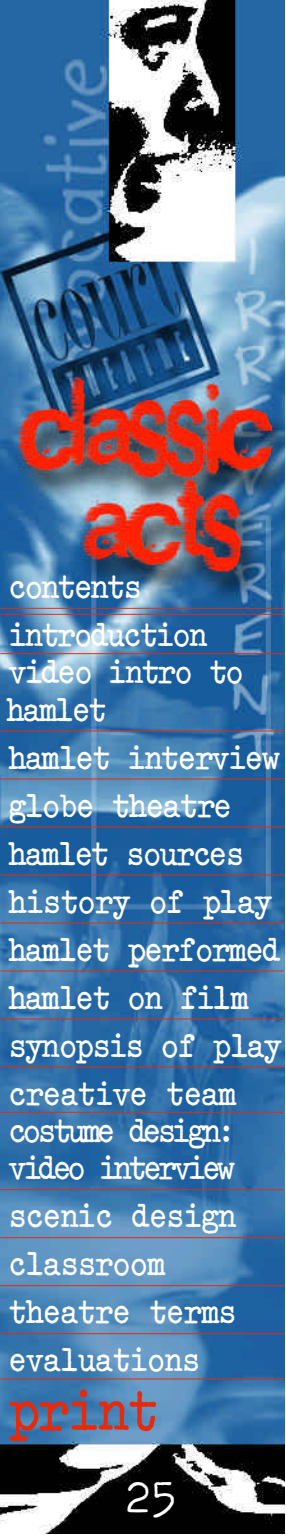
## Surrealism

An artistic and literary movement starting in France in the 1920s. The poet Andre Breton drew up his *Manifeste du Surrealisme* in 1924.

Surrealism was anti-rational and anti-realist. It advocated the liberation of the mind from logic: instead, art should grow out of confrontation with the unconscious mind. Dreams, hallucinating states, automatic writing, and even nonsense are the inspiration and subject matter of art.

Especially in the art world, surrealism has been widely influential.





## Absurd, Theatre of the Absurd.

The philosophy of EXISTENTIALISM tends to depict man as isolated in a purposeless and incomprehensible universe of space and time. Lacking any essential motive or guiding principles, or any inherent sense of truth or meaning, man's existence is characterized by anxiety and absurdity.

During the twentieth century many writers have depicted man's absurd status. The European literary movements of EXPRESSIONISM and SURREALISM provided techniques well adapted for elaborating this vision. In prose, works by the German novelist Franz Kafka such as *The Trial* (1925) and *Metamorphosis* (1912) exhibit their protagonists as having to endure bizarre and incomprehensible situations. In the theatre, surrealism and FARCE come together to form a new kind of drama. The label 'Theatre of the Absurd' has been common since Martin Esslin's book of that title, published in 1961.

'Absurd' drama flourished in the 1950s: Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter are notable playwrights whose works have been thus labeled.

## Expressionism

"Expressionism originally dominated German theatre for some time during the 1920's. It too was a reaction against theatrical realism, it sought to mirror inner psychological realities rather than physical appearances." (*The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre*)

Expressionism at this time tended to focus on extreme psychological states and explore them "in a bold use of symbolic settings [scenery] and costumes. Expressionism was in many ways primarily a designer's theatre."

Expressionist writers and painters show reality distorted by an emotional or abnormal state of mind, even by

madness. Van Gogh's famous violent landscapes with whirls of thick paint representing cornfields and menacing v-shaped black crows are examples of this kind of distortion.

In literature the Swedish dramatist Strindberg is a notable exponent of Expressionism. His *Dream Play* (1901) dislocates the ordinary sequence of time and conveys a view of the unreality of man's existence through a collection of dream-like fragments. This departure from the rigidities of realism in the theatre has been highly influential in twentieth-century dramatic writing, though the Expressionist movement as such was short lived.

## Farce

A kind of drama intended primarily to provoke laughter, using exaggerated characters and complicated plots, full of absurd episodes, ludicrous situations and knockabout action. Mistaken identity is frequently an element in the plot.

Farce is obviously related to comedy, but it has no apparent intention other than rumbustious entertainment and the good-natured depiction of folly. Unlike satire, it is not censorious.

Farcical episodes date back to Aristophanes and occur alongside serious drama in all ages. The derivation of the word is suggestive. The Latin term *farsa* was first applied to passages of medieval French inserted in the Latin text of the Mass: then it came to be used to describe impromptu additions to religious plays (INTERLUDES in the English MYSTERY PLAYS) and from this use its modern meaning has developed.

## Teacher and Student Evaluations

The feedback you give us on your visit to Court Theater  
and **classic acts!** will help us to improve both.

You can follow these links to Adobe Acrobat  
versions of the evaluation forms:

[Teacher Evaluation Form \(.pdf\)](#)

[Student Evaluation Form \(.pdf\)](#)

These forms can be printed out and returned by  
mail to:

Court Theatre  
5535 South Ellis Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60637

FAX: (773) 834-1897

You will also find **Microsoft Word** versions of  
these files in the folder named EVALUATIONS,  
included on the CD.

These can be filled out on the computer and  
e-mailed as attachments to:

[education@courttheatre.org](mailto:education@courttheatre.org)





# classic acts

from court theatre's  
CAST partnership

classic acts was designed & edited by Roger Smart

Additional assistance from Charles Newell,  
Guy Adkins, Celise Kalke & Joyce Kim Lee.

click here  
to quit

For technical assistance in the use of  
this CD-ROM please call 773.702.8874  
or e-mail [education@courtheatre.org](mailto:education@courtheatre.org)

Multi-media presentation created using  
QuarkXpress, Adobe Acrobat,  
Adobe Photoshop, iMovie,  
Felt Tip Sound Studio & SoundApp

**CLASSICS!**  
**ACTORS!**  
**STUDENTS!**  
**TEACHERS!**



Court Theatre High School Matinee Program  
Teacher Evaluation

Name\_\_\_\_\_

School\_\_\_\_\_

Department/Subject\_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

School Phone\_\_\_\_\_ Fax\_\_\_\_\_

Home Address\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone\_\_\_\_\_ e-mail\_\_\_\_\_

Production\_\_\_\_\_

Date Attended\_\_\_\_\_

# of Students Participating\_\_\_\_\_ Grade level \_\_\_\_\_

Subject of class\_\_\_\_\_

- 
1. Did you enjoy the performance? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
  2. Did your students indicate that they had enjoyed the performance? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
  3. Did you feel the performance was educationally relevant? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
  4. If so, please give some reasons.

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5. If not, why not?

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6. Did you use the Study Guide that was provided? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

7. If so, what parts did you find useful?

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8. If not, why not?

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9. What recommendations would you make for improving/updating the Study Guide format?

[illegible]

\_(please continue of back of sheet)

10. Did the experience of seeing this live performance stimulate or motivate your students to:

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss the play in class      \_\_\_\_\_ Write critical essays

\_\_\_\_\_Act out scenes from the play

\_\_\_\_Act out original skits      \_\_\_\_Write original poetry, plays etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Draw or create any type of artwork      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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*(please continue on back of sheet)*

Please rate the following:

**Study Guide:**

	Poor-----		Good-----		Excellent
Thoroughness	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to use	1	2	3	4	5
Connected to curricula	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant to students	1	2	3	4	5
Fun	1	2	3	4	5
Prepared Teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Prepared Student	1	2	3	4	5

**Post-Show Discussion:**

Helped clarify ambiguities	1	2	3	4	5
Gave students voice	1	2	3	4	5
Encouraged varied opinions	1	2	3	4	5
Was educationally relevant	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, how would you describe your experience at Court?

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*(please continue of back of sheet)*

What suggestions would you have for improving the Court experience?

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*(please continue of back of sheet)*

Did you attend the teacher workshop and free preview for this production?

Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If not, would you like information on the An Audience at Court program? Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Would you be interested in classroom workshops at your school with Court artists?

Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_



Court Theatre High School Matinee Program  
Student Evaluation

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Show \_\_\_\_\_

Did you enjoy the performance or not? Please give your reasons.

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What did you think about the production values?  
(set design, lights, costumes, sound and props)

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What did you think about the acting? Were there any actors you particularly liked or disliked, and why?

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If you could talk to the playwright, the director or the designers of this play or both, what sort of things would you like to say to them?

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Did you use the multi-media CD *Classic Acts*? Did you find it interesting, informative and easy to use?

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Suggest any improvements you would like to see made to the multi-media CD *Classic Acts*

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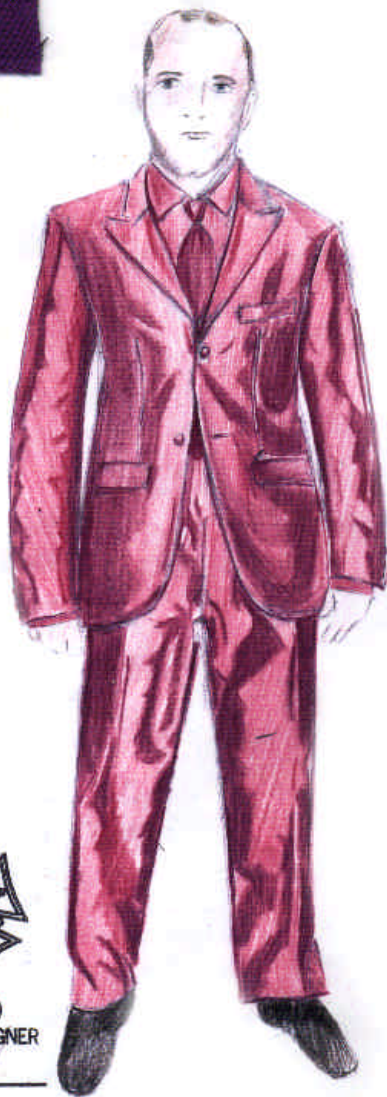
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Claudius



D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
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Gertrude



D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER

HONORE 

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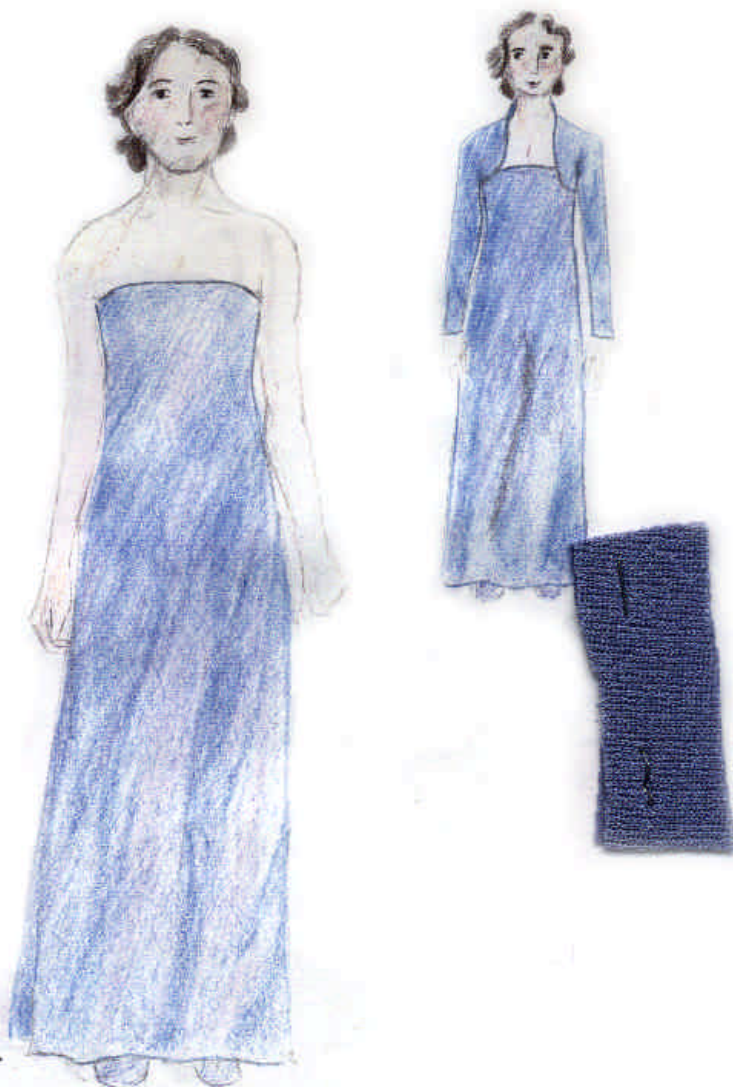
# Hamlet



C.D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER

THANK YOU

# Ophelia



C.D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER

SIGNATURE

*TM*

Polonius



C.D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER

SIGNATURE

*[Signature]*



Guildenstern



C.D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER

SIGNATURE



Rosencrantz



C.D. 3750  
COSTUME DESIGNER

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# Grave Digger





Ethan Hawke

Kenneth Brannagh



Lawrence Olivier



Mel Gibson

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