

PLAYS FOR  
**New Audiences**

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

***The Ruff Guide to  
Shakespeare***

by Toby Hulse

The license issued in connection with PNA perusal scripts is a limited license and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for New Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy, or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AN ENSEMBLE OF SEVEN OR MORE ACTORS who play...

- SIR NATHANIEL from LOVE'S LABOURS LOST
- THREE WITCHES from MACBETH
- AN UNBELIEVABLY COOL TEENAGER
- AN ELIZABETHAN CHILD
- TWO PRETENTIOUS GROWN-UPS
- JOHN SHAKESPEARE
- MARY ARDEN
- A PLAYER FROM THE QUEEN'S MEN
- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
- A SCHOOL TEACHER
- A CLASS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN
- ANNE HATHAWAY
- A NUMBER OF HAWKERS
- A ROWDY CROWD OF LONDONERS
- A GAMBLER
- AN INNOCENT NEWLY ARRIVED FROM THE COUNTRY
- JAMES BURBAGE
- ROBERT GREENE
- BEN JONSON
- THE HOST OF MASTERMIND
- KATHERINA from THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
- THE SOOTHSAYER from JULIUS CAESAR
- TIMON from TIMON OF ATHENS
- CLEOPATRA from ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA
- ANTIGONUS from THE WINTER'S TALE
- A SAVAGE BOHEMIAN BEAR
- SIR JOHN FALSTAFF
- QUEEN ELIZABETH I
- ROMEO from ROMEO AND JULIET
- JULIET from ROMEO AND JULIET
- THE MASSED DEAD OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS
- GILES ALLEN
- SIR HENRY WOTTON
- PROSPERO from THE TEMPEST

NB The line attributions for the Ensemble are suggestions only.

## SEQUENCE ONE – Introductions

**ACTOR 1** Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, kings, queens, nobles and – eurgh – you groundlings down there, we are proud to present for you today *The Ruff Guide to Shakespeare*. The story of the greatest playwright of all time!

*'The Greatest Playwright of all Time' sting.*

What you are about to see is everything you need to know about the greatest playwright of all time.

*'The Greatest Playwright of all Time' sting.*

William Shakespeare, the greatest playwright of all time.

*'The Greatest Playwright of all Time' sting.*

**ACTOR 2** – his life, his work and the times in which he lived –

**ACTOR 3** – the stuff you wanted to know –

**ACTOR 4** – the stuff you didn't want to know –

**ACTOR 5** – the stuff you didn't realise you wanted to know –

**ACTOR 6** – the stuff you didn't realise you already knew –

**ACTOR 7** – the stuff you wrote on a tiny piece of paper so that you would always remember it and put into your school trousers to keep it safe but that you forgot was there and now your school trousers have been through the wash and the tiny piece of paper has turned into a small, hard, crinkly blob and covered your big sister's favourite black hoody in thousands of bits of white fluff so that she has stolen your two favourite teddies and cut them up, baked them in a pie and made you eat them...

**ENSEMBLE** What???

**ACTOR 7** ... just me then...

**ACTOR 1** – we are going to tell you about his life –

*A sign is revealed that reads 'William Shakespeare 1564 – 1616'.*

**ACTOR 7** ... but I really loved those teddies...

**ACTOR 2** – about all of the plays he wrote –

*A list of all his plays is revealed.*

**ACTOR 7** ... I named them Chiron and Demetrius...

**ACTOR 3** – about the theatres in which they were performed –

*The flag that flew above the Globe appears over the set.*

**ACTOR 7** ... after the characters in my favourite Shakespeare play...

**ACTOR 4** – about the actors who performed them –

**ACTOR 7** ... *Titus Andronicus*...

**ACTOR 6** – and about the audiences that watched them –

**ACTOR 1** You lot. Eurgh.

**ACTOR 7** ... but what I like most about my teddies is that...

**ACTOR 3** Will you be quiet about your teddies?!

**ACTOR 7** ... sorry.

**ACTOR 4** – all in just one hour!

*Screeching brakes.*

**ACTOR 5** What did you just say?

**ACTOR 4** 'All in just one hour!'

**ACTOR 5** I thought that's what you said.

*Beat.*

You mean, we've got to perform a complete guide to William Shakespeare, everything you need to know about his life, all of his plays and the Elizabethan stage in just one hour?

**ACTOR 4** 'All in just one hour!'

**ACTOR 5** Blimey. Can it be done?

**ACTOR 6** Maybe not, but

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It 'twere done quickly.

*[To us.]* That's from Shakespeare's play Macbeth.

**ACTOR 5** Quickly? You're telling me! We'd better get cracking, I think we just wasted three minutes there.

**ENSEMBLE** Gulp!

**ACTOR 6** And cross Macbeth off that list. That's one fewer play we have to mention.

*Macbeth is crossed off the list of Shakespeare's plays.*

**ACTOR 7** And Titus Andronicus. My teddies...

**ACTOR 6** Yes, and Titus Andronicus.

*Titus Andronicus is crossed off the list of Shakespeare's plays.*

Two down, thirty five to go...

***The Ruff Guide to Shakespeare Song*** (to the theme tune of the 70s UK comedy show called *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*)

MEET THE GANG 'CAUSE IT'S TIME TO SEE  
THE RUFF GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE!

WITH MUSIC AND LAUGHTER, TO HELP US ON OUR WAY,  
AS WE LEARN ABOUT EACH AND EVERY PLAY:  
THERE'S COMEDIES, TRAGEDIES, HISTORIES TOO,  
WHEN WILL'S ABOUT, YOU WON'T FEEL BLUE!

SO, MEET THE GANG 'CAUSE IT'S TIME TO SEE  
THE RUFF GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE!

WE ARE HERE TO GIVE YOU SOME FUN  
SO GIVE US A CHEER, EACH AND EVERY ONE,  
JUST GATHER AROUND, PUT ON DOUBLET AND HOSE,

AND STRIKE A SUITABLE SHAKESPEAREAN POSE!

SO, MEET THE GANG 'CAUSE IT'S TIME TO SEE  
THE RUFF GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE!

R – U – R – U – F – F –  
THE RUFF GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE!

**SEQUENCE TWO – All the world's a stage**

**ACTOR 5** So, where do we start?

**ACTOR 1** We start at the beginning, of course.

**ENSEMBLE** All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely –

**ACTOR 5** Stop.

**ACTOR 6** Stop?

**ACTOR 5** Stop.

**ACTOR 6** Why?

**ACTOR 5** I don't get it.

**ACTOR 6** What?

**ACTOR 5** I don't get it.

**ACTOR 6** What?

**ACTOR 5** It's all blah, blah, blah.

**ACTOR 6** What?

**ACTOR 5** Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

*Beat.*

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

**ACTOR 6** I'm sorry?

**ACTOR 3** 'All the world's a stage' – it's a speech from Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*.

**ACTOR 7** I'll cross it off.

*As You Like It is crossed off the list of Shakespeare's plays.*

**ACTOR 5** *As You Like It?*

**ACTOR 3** *As You Like it.*

**ACTOR 5** Well, I don't.

**ACTOR 3** Don't what?

**ACTOR 5** Like it. Sounds a load of rubbish to me.

**ACTOR 3** How dare you?! These are the words of William Shakespeare. The greatest playwright of all time.

*The 'Greatest Playwright of All Time' sting.*

**ACTOR 5** The greatest playwright of all time?

*'The Greatest Playwright of all Time' sting.*

**ACTOR 3** Yes, the greatest playwright of all time.

*The 'Greatest Playwright of All Time' sting.*

**ACTOR 5** Well, he can't be that great. I haven't got the faintest idea what you're saying.

**ACTOR 2** Oh, that's because the words were written over four hundred years ago. The English language has changed a bit since then.

**ACTOR 5** Eh?

**ACTOR 2** Let me give you some examples. When, for instance, Sir Nathaniel in the play *Love's Labours Lost* says:

*Love's Labours Lost is crossed off the list of Shakespeare's plays.*

**SIR NATH.** Society, saith the text, is the happiness of life.