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AUDITION!

when: Monday & Tuesday, April 27 & 28 at 7pm
where: Todd theatre
what: prepare/perform any poem of your choice

the first show of the fall '15 semester, Under Milk Wood, is auditioning this semester!

JOIN US NEXT SEASON!

UNDER MILK WOOD
by Dylan Thomas
directed by Nigel Maister
opening October 2015

COURAGE!*
(a world premiere)
a new pop-rock music-theatre work based on Bertolt Brecht’s Mother Courage and Her Children
adapted and directed by Nigel Maister
original music by Matt Marks
opening April 2016

YERMA
by Federico Garcia Lorca
directed by Gisela Cardenas
opening December 2015

UNDER MILK WOOD

THE TAMING OF THE SHEEP

When:
Monday & Tuesday,
April 27 & 28 at 7pm
Where: Todd Theatre
What: Prepare/Perform
Any Poem of Your Choice

* working title

* no prior experience necessary
get with the program

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a note about the program

Program content is compiled by the production’s Assistant Director, Kat McCorkle, and edited by Nigel Maister. For a complete list of sources and works cited, please contact the Theatre Program.
The UR International Theatre Program wishes the following students who have contributed to the Theatre Program over the course of their academic careers and who are now graduating: good luck, godspeed, and many broken metaphorical legs in the years ahead. Stay in touch!

William Shakespeare is arguably the best known and most frequently performed playwright. Despite Shakespeare’s ubiquitous presence in high school curricula, college literature courses, and both professional and amateur theatres around the world, much of his Bard of Avon’s personal life remains shrouded in mystery. What we do know comes from the few records left at the time of his birth and professional work.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. Though the exact date of his birth is unknown, the church in Stratford-upon-Avon records a William Shakespeare born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, baptized on 26 April 1564. Scholars generally agree that he would have been born about three days earlier, and his birth is customarily celebrated on 23 April (the date, coincidentally, of his death in 1616). Shakespeare would have been educated until about sixteen years of age (the date, coincidentally, of his death). He seems to have found a curriculum heavy in Latin literature, learned through memorization, translation, and performance. At a young age, Shakespeare would have dedicated works to their patrons, granting them elevated status among the nobility during England’s Renaissance. Shakespeare’s first major patron was the Earl of Southampton, a wealthy young nobleman. Shakespeare dedicated both Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece to Southampton. Additionally, many Shakespearean scholars believe that Southampton is the subject of Shakespeare’s sonnets.

Shakespeare later gained favor with both Queen Elizabeth and King James I. Queen Elizabeth allowed professional theatres to operate in London, and King James became a patron of Shakespeare and his theatre company, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, which was renamed The King’s Men in 1603 in honor of James. Shakespeare continued to write until his death in 1616, on what could have been his 52nd birthday. Though the historical record of Shakespeare’s personal life is slim, we do know that he was well-regarded during his lifetime. As his friend and occasional rival Ben Jonson had it:

And we have wits to read and praise to give.
Thou art a monument without a tomb
And art alive still while thy book doth live.
And we have wits to read and praise to give.

Ben Jonson, “The Attraction of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare”
Matthew Earnest (Director) Matthew’s many productions of new and classical plays, operas, and his own original works and literary adaptations have been seen in NYC, across the US, Europe, and in Africa. Originally from Texas, he is an associate artist at Germany’s English Theatre Berlin and at The REP/University of Delaware, and from 1995-2007 he was Founding Artistic Director of international touring company, deep ellum ensemble, based in NYC. Today, in addition to an active career as an independent director around the country, Matthew is Founding Artistic Director of The Lunar Strategem, where he has written, directed, and choreographed [gag], Can You Forgive Her?, Dead Letter Office (a prelude to Bartleby the Scrivener), and I, Ca$$ie… or The end of days, among others. The more text-based of these pieces are published and available for purchase. Matthew was twice granted permission by the family of Bertolt Brecht to translate that playwright’s works for his own productions, and he has translated/adapted several other European dramatists as well, including Chekhov, Ibsen, and Büchner. Matthew was profiled in American Theatre magazine for his 2010 production of Wanderlust: a History of Walking, which he adapted from the bestselling non-fiction book by Rebecca Solnit, created with an Access to Artistic Excellence grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and premiered at Cleveland Public Theatre before being invited to the Ice Factory in NYC. Matthew’s US premiere of Madrid playwright Juan Mayorga’s Himmelweg (Way to Heaven) ran Off-Broadway for nine months in 2011 after receiving The New York Times Critics’ Pick, and in summer 2014, Matthew was among a group of artists invited to Tijuana, Mexico to participate in TCG’s International Artistic Collaboration Forum. His NYC productions include: The Public Theater/Joe’s Pub, Gramercy Arts Theater, Teatro Círculo, Museum of Jewish Heritage, Ice Factory, Ontological-Hysteric Theater, Washington Square Church, Present Company Theatorium, Midtown International Theatre Festival, The Bridge Dance-Theater Series at WAX, RGB’s Kraine Theater, NY International Fringe Festival, Chelsea Arts’ Theater, One Dream Theater, and NADA, Inc. His regional work includes: Amphibian Stage Productions (Fort Worth), Daniel Arts Center (MA), The REP (DE), Texas Shakespeare Festival/Hilberry Rep (Detroit), Cleveland Public Theatre, Adirondack Theatre Festival (NY), Beck Center for the Arts (Cleveland), DSST Festival (Ethiopia), Dublin Festival Fringe (Ireland), Warehouse Theatre (SC), Burning Coal Theatre Co (NC), Stoneleaf Festival (NC), Stillwater Theatre (NC), Porthouse Theatre (OH), Theatre Outlet (PA), Shakespeare Festival of Dallas, Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck (NY), Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival, Kitchen Dog Theatre (Dallas), FIT Festival (Dallas), Arlington Opera (TX), and Moonstruck Theatre (Dallas). Matthew has taught graduate and undergraduate students, led workshops, and directed productions at many universities, including Coastal Carolina University, Marshall University, University of Rochester, Ohio Northern University, University of North Texas, Meredith College, and Kent State University, where he was the 2008 Roe Green Visiting Director. A Drama League Directing Fellow, Matthew has created works with support from the NEA, ArtNY, and others, and he has been an adjudicator of new plays at the American College Theater Festival. Matthew’s many awards include the Berkshire Stage and Screen’s Best of 2013, Cleveland Scene Best Director, Best Director of 2013. Cleveland Scene Best Director, a Wilde Award (nomination) Outstanding Alumnus (UNF), BIFF (NY Fringe), Audience Favourite (Dublin Fringe), Dallas Theater Critics Forum Award, and the Dallas Observer’s Best of Dallas, among others, and his productions have been cited on Top 10 lists in major newspapers around the country. Matthew is a member of SDC, the labor union of professional theater directors and choreographers in America. He lives in Manhattan’s East Village and in the Hudson Valley with artist and stage designer, William Bezek. www.matthewearnest.com

Halle Burns ................................... Sly, Vincentio
Ron Aulakh .................................. Hostess, Petruchio
Lydia Jimenez ............................. Lord, Baptista, Servant, Haberdasher
Devin Goodman .......................... Huntsman, Lucentio (later disguised as Cambio), Tranio, Servant
Ian Von Fange ............................. Kate
Alberto Carrillo Casas ....................... Grumio, Servant, Tailor, Widow
kevin Bodhipaksha ........................ Gremio, Servant
Jonathan Wetherbee ...................... Hortensio (later disguised as Licio), Curtis
Elizabeth Scheuerman .................. Servant, Biondello, Merchant

“My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, or else my heart concealing it will break.”
Katherina, IV iii  ll 79-80

“To me she’s married, not unto my clothes. Could I repair what she will wear in me as I can change these poor accoutrements, ’twere well for Kate and better for myself.”
Petruccio, III ii  ll 116-119

www.matthewearnest.com
Marriage in Shakespeare’s day was often seen as a business deal. Marriages could often improve a family’s social standing, and women from a wealthy family often brought a large dowry to the marriage. Men and women both had rigidly defined gender roles that influenced their role in the courtship process and the marital relationship.

In a marriage, men were seen as the providers, while women were in charge of the children and servants. The Elizabethan courtship process was a long one, and a marriage was typically a public ceremony followed by a more private feast for the families of the couple. Before the couple could be married, they would need to be publicly promised to one another. First, they would hold hands in front of witnesses as their betrothal was announced, as Katharina and Petruchio do in Act II, Scene I. Then, a proclamation, called the “banns” — from the Middle English word for proclamation—would be read in the couple’s home parish church on three consecutive Sundays (or other holy days, if applicable) prior to the wedding. Reading the banns was a chance for anyone with legal objections to the marriage, such as knowledge of a pre-existing marriage contract or a vow of celibacy to “speak now or forever hold their peace”; otherwise, the marriage would continue as planned.

In some cases, however, couples needed a more expedited marriage, and for a significant fee a marriage license and exemption from the banns could be provided. Shakespeare himself married Anne Hathaway in a more hurried fashion, as she was three months pregnant and he was a minor and needed his father’s consent. Though frowned upon, marriages like Will and Anne’s weren’t uncommon. Many couples engaged in sex once they were betrothed (or even before) and many brides were pregnant when married. Thus, the marriages between Katharina and Petruchio, and even more so Bianca and Lucentio, though not typical, would not have been unheard of in Shakespeare’s time.

Marriage in Elizabethan England aimed primarily to produce heirs for the family, especially in the upper classes. Only sons could inherit, but in the event that a family had only daughters, the eldest daughter would inherit — but usually her share of her family’s wealth would go to her husband as a dowry. Baptista promises large sums of money and land to Petruchio to take Katherina off his hands, and Petruchio in return promises a large “jointure” (a portion of land, goods, and/or money promised to a woman after marriage in the event that she became a widow).

Once married, the wife would move to her husband’s home and become part of his family, where she became the head of his household. While men were expected to be the breadwinners and provide financially for their families, women would be in charge of managing the household accounts, overseeing the servants, and caring for the children.

Humans have hunted with falcons or other birds of prey since 2000 BCE. Falconry gained popularity in Europe during the Renaissance and was seen as a symbol of high status. After social change brought on by the French Revolution in the 1800s, and as concern for the environment rose during the 19th and 20th centuries, falconry has fallen somewhat out of favor, though the sport is still practiced.

The theatre in Shakespeare’s day had a decidedly mixed reputation. While Queen Elizabeth I and King James were patrons of Shakespeare’s theatre company, and allowed the theaters to operate, members of the Church of England saw theatre as a corrupting influence and regarded actors as unsavory characters. All public theaters were closed in 1642 by the Puritan Parliament.

Padua is a city located in Northern Italy. Traditionally, its founding is dated at 1183 BCE. During Shakespeare’s lifetime, Padua was ruled by the Venetians, and was noted for its university.

Women in Shakespeare's time did not have the same access to formal education as their male counterparts. Lower-class women would have very little, if any, schooling. Upper-class women, like Bianca and Katherina, would be educated by tutors in their home or the home of a friend of the family. A woman's primary duty was to care for her husband and children and manage the home, so her education would usually focus on music, dancing, keeping the household accounts up to date, and some Latin and Greek.

padua

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Humoral theory was an important part of medical philosophy during Shakespeare's time. Hippocrates and his contemporaries in Ancient Greece theorized that the human body was composed of four substances called humors. These were black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. When their humors were balanced, a person was mentally and physically healthy. However, excesses of one or more humors would negatively affect a person's health and temperament. Diet and lifestyle could also affect the balance of humors in the body. Grumio refuses to give Kate meat because red meat could also affect the balance of humors in the body.

Shakespeare is well known not only for his plays, but for his clever use of language. The Bard is not an undeserved title, as Shakespeare coined a number of phrases that we still use today, and many English words were first written in Shakespeare's scripts. Some noteworthy quips from Shakespeare's plays, but the Bard did his fair share of borrowing from other stories as well. “Taming” folktales—when a headstrong, argumentative woman is subdued by her husband—are common in many traditions, and the motif of woman tamed by marriage is even more ubiquitous.

Shrews in Greek history, such as Socrates' nagging wife, Xanithippe, would have been familiar to Shakespeare. Fast forward a few thousand years, and an English ballad called A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin for Her Good Behavior becomes quite popular. This folksong describes a quarrelsome woman whose husband punishes her by beating her and then wrapping her in the salted skin of his horse, Morel. Shakespeare would most likely have been familiar with the ballad, and though the coercion of Kate in Taming is much more psychological and considerably less physically violent, the pattern is similar, leading many scholars to believe that Shakespeare could have at least partly been inspired by A Merry Jest.

The subplot of Bianca and her lovers most likely is a reference to George Gascoigne's play, Supposes, where a woman is wooed by three suitors and must choose one. The pranks played on Sly are slightly harder to pin down a definite source for, but oral tradition and folktales often featured beggars being elevated to higher social status, either through mistake or trickery. The Arabian Nights features such a story, and some scholars believe that Shakespeare may have been familiar, at least by word of mouth, with those tales.

The Taming of the Shrew itself has also been the basis of numerous adaptations, the most famous of which is Cole Porter's musical, Kiss Me, Kate. Kiss Me, Kate is also a play-within-a-play, and follows the story of the backstage intrigues of four actors as they sing, dance, flirt, and fight their way through a musical adaptation of The Taming of the Shrew. Songs such as “I've Come to Wive it Wealthily in Padua”, “Where is the Life That Late I Led?”, and “I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Curst” are direct references to the text of The Taming of the Shrew. Songs such as “I've Come to Wive it Wealthily in Padua”, “Where is the Life That Late I Led?”, and “I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Curst” are direct references to the text of Taming of the Shrew.
Matthew Earnest: I've always loved Kate, her intelligence, her anger, her dissatisfaction with the status quo. She's always seemed like someone I would know, a very contemporary figure flailing about in an old, conservative world. Her brilliance is that she realizes, through the mentorship of the only person who has ever really loved her, Petruchio, that it is possible to reimagine herself and find happiness, and that the violence she has always used to get what she wants is not necessary.

Kat McCorkle: What do you think are the biggest takeaways for a modern audience experiencing Taming of the Shrew?

Matthew Earnest: Primarily, that one can create the world in which one wants to live. That world won't be perfect, nothing ever can be, but you don't have to be a rebel all your life, or a victim. You can be the protagonist in your own story.

Kat McCorkle: The Taming of the Shrew can rub some people the wrong way, to put it lightly. What has been the most challenging about working on this production?

Matthew Earnest: The same thing that's hard about doing any Shakespeare play—that most people already know it and think of it as holy writ, from them even though it often had nothing to do with the scenario or plot outline and add their own personal touches, dialogue, and slapstick humor. The scenarios often centered on a pair of young lovers opposed by some twist of fate. ‘They would be helped, in comic fashion, by a troop of servants, called the Zanni, who provided the bulk of the jokes and commentary. Other scenarios would draw on folktales or Greek drama, but the actors would often add in snide remarks based on local politics or recent events.

Most actors would be masked, and wear elaborate costumes to fit the stereotypical characters they embodied. Actors would also practice improvising small bits of comic action or dialogue, or lazzerini (from the Italian for joke or witticism), and add them into the scenario to fill time or get more laughs out of the audience. Some actors would become famous for being able to perform a particular lazzerino, which their audiences would expect from them even though it often had nothing to do with the plot or the scenario. In Taming of the Shrew, many of the characters are based upon stock characters from the commedia. Gremio, Bianca’s elderly suitor, is a perfect example of the stock character, Pantaloon—a rich yet foolish old man who is hoodwinked by the young lovers (Inamorati or The Straights) and their servants. Shakespeare drew upon the commedia dell’arte for inspiration for many of his other comedies, including Twelfth Night and A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Unlike in Shakespeare’s theatre, women would occasionally take the stage in commedia troupes, as a maid or noble lady. Another off-shoot of the commedia dell’arte that is still alive and well today, especially in England, is the Punch and Judy puppet show. Punch’s character is based upon one of the Zanni, Pulcinello—a thuggish and belligerent character. These commedia-inspired puppet shows arrived in England in the early 17th century, and quickly became popular street entertainment.

Punch and Judy continue to be well-known characters to this day, just as the shrewish Kate, the Panta-loons, and the Harlequins make their entrances in theatres the world over, loudly making their voices heard.

Shakespeare, like most playwrights of his day, would have been familiar with commedia dell’arte, a type of physical, improvisation-based theatre that originated in Italy during the late fifteenth century, and which later gained popularity throughout England and France. The commedia dell’arte troupes are considered some of the first professional theatre companies, and many went on to considerable fame in Italy, France, and England. In Winifred Smith’s The Commedia Dell’Arte: A Study in Italian Popular Comedy, she notes that “a commedia was always in part the transitory creation of the individual actors who played it”. Professional improvisational actors would work within a specific scenario or plot outline and add their own personal touches, dialogue, and slapstick humor. The scenarios often centered on a pair of young lovers opposed by some twist of fate. They would be helped, in comic fashion, by a troop of servants, called the Zanni, who provided the bulk of the jokes and commentary. Other scenarios would draw on folktales or Greek drama, but the actors would often add in snide remarks based on local politics or recent events.

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a conversation
with director
matthew
earnest