

Lex-Ham Community Theater
presents

*Our Rotten
Town*

by Dutton Foster

Room 317, Landmark Center
June 8, 9 & 10, 2017

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Cast Members

Character	Actor
Sherry Allen	Witch
Ashok Bokde	Hamlet
Ed Burke	Stage Manager
Sophia Goodner	Lady Macbeth
Mahmoud Hakima	Othello
Alice Howard	Witch
Lisette Lilac	Lady Capulet
Courtney Marti	Desdemona
Mary Mornes	Gertrude
Amanda Oporto	Witch
Timothy Payton	Polonius
Robert Permenter	Gravedigger
Agnes Rzepecki	Juliet
James Satter	Laertes
Bill Solvang	Hamlet's father
Brian Tangren	Romeo
Clarissa Van Dale	Ophelia

Our Rotten Town was first produced at
Saint Paul Academy and Summit School, Saint Paul, Minnesota
on Thursday, January 22, 1998
directed by the author

Please turn off phones, pagers, and other devices during the performance.

Production Team

John Kunik	Director
Erin Zoromski	Stage Manager
Urban Landreman	Producer

Author's Note

For 19 years before retiring, I taught a Shakespeare course at St. Paul Academy and Summit School. At some point during those years, I found it rewarding to allow my students to supplement traditional analysis of the plays with a more creative approach. Instead of I asked them to consider imagining, instead of analyzing their way into the text. One approach I suggested, and which many students tried, was the after-death dialogue, in which two characters from different plays have a chat in the afterlife.... Hamlet meets Romeo in a bar. Shylock gets to judge Portia. Goneril visits with Lady Macbeth.

Meanwhile, in 1997, I directed *Our Town* for the first time. It took me decades to realize the greatness of this play, which comes to crescendo in Act 3. Young Emily leaves her grave for a short visit to her past, very soon realizing that both she and her family are taking life for granted, failing to really see each other or express their love. She finally exclaims, "Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anyone to realize you." Thus Wilder reminds us to celebrate our very existence, to see and hear and feel. At any rate, the stage full of deceased villagers suddenly sparked an Aha! moment, and I felt that I might get some mileage from afterlife dialogue myself.

I saw that a parody populating Grover's Corners with Shakespearean characters would allow deceased couples, for instance, to hash out the shortcomings that led to mayhem in the original plays. I chose the one-act format so that we could take the play to contest, which of course we did. It was fun to write, fun to produce, and fun to see it reach publication. If Guffman is here tonight, maybe we'll make it to Broadway.

Dutton Foster

Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*

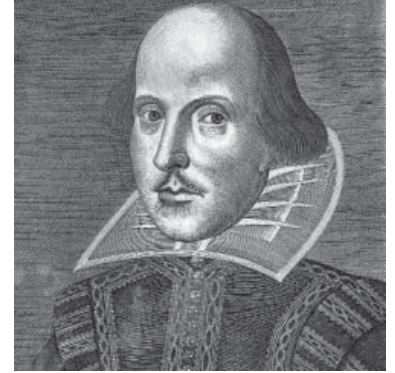
When Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* opened in 1938, Franklin Roosevelt was in the midst of his second term of being President trying to keep America out of the entanglement with Europe and Hitler's rise in Germany, Benny Goodman's ensemble played their famous jazz concert at Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney's film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first feature-length animated cartoon with sound, was drawing crowds all across America, and Ernest Hemingway's new novel, *To Have and Have Not*, about life among the hard-working poor (i.e., the "Have Nots") was being read by book clubs. It was a time when artists of all types were experimenting and talking about the social ills of the day.

It was in this environment that Wilder wrote this highly experimental play with no set, a character, the Stage Manager, who speaks to and interacts with the audience, and whose final act takes place in a cemetery.

The initial reaction by critics and audience members to the play was mixed at best. The review in *Variety* said it was the "most extravagant waste of fine talent." Brooks Atkinson, the theatre critic of *The New York Times*, however, called it "one of the finest achievements of the current stage." The Pulitzer Prize committee saw the play's creativity and awarded it the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1938.

A Quick Recap of Shakespeare

All the characters of Bard's Corners are from plays written by William Shakespeare. In case you missed some of these plays, here are some very brief synopses of them.



Hamlet - Something is indeed rotten in Denmark. Hamlet is a Prince whose father died through some poison being poured in his ear. Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, has remarried within weeks of his father's death. This upsets Hamlet greatly, but he is uncertain what to do - "to be or not to be". Hamlet had been close friends with Ophelia - the daughter of the extremely talkative and advice-giving Polonius who ironically says that "brevity is the soul of wit". Polonius' son, Laertes, leaves the country to go to school in France. By mistake, Hamlet kills Polonius who was hiding and spying behind a tapestry, or arras. Bad things continue to happen. Claudius - Gertrude's second husband and now the king - decides that Hamlet must die. Hamlet and Laertes fight with swords at a family gathering and both die. Gertrude accidentally drinks poison intended for Hamlet and she dies.

King Lear - Lear is aging and wants to retire from being King. He decides to divide up his kingdom among his three daughters. One daughter, Cordelia, gets in trouble by telling Lear the truth rather than effusive compliments. Lear gets angry and disinherits her. He then causes trouble with his other two daughters, Goneril and Regan, and ends up with only a couple of people to accompany him. His new-found miseries eventually bring him to madness while the armies of Goneril and Regan fight each other. Lots of people die or are killed and Lear finally succumbs to his sorrows and dies, too.

Macbeth - Macbeth is a Scottish general who is upset by a prophesy by three witches that he will become the King of Scotland. His wife, Lady Macbeth, urges the reluctant Macbeth to act swiftly to make the prophesy come true. Lots of people get killed. Eventually Prince Malcolm, with the help of an army from Norway, brings peace to the land.

Othello - Othello is a successful Moorish general in the Venetian army. He and the beautiful, but much younger, Desdemona have gotten married without the full blessing of her father. Othello's aide, Iago, is angry because Othello has promoted Cassio and not him. Iago plants the seeds of doubt and jealousy in Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful. A key piece is a missing strawberry-decorated handkerchief that was a gift from Othello to Desdemona. Othello's jealousy grows unchecked despite the pleas and denials of Desdemona. He eventually smothers her to death. Iago's treachery is ultimately exposed. Othello says that he "loved not wisely, but too well" and kills himself.

Romeo and Juliet - The play about two "star-crossed" lovers, Romeo and Juliet in "a story of more woe". Romeo is from the Montague family and Juliet is from the Capulets. The families have feuded for a long time, but Romeo and Juliet meet, fall in love, and secretly get married by Friar Lawrence. Trouble soon arises, however, and Romeo gets banished from Verona by the Prince. Juliet is distraught and, through a drug provided by Friar Lawrence, appears to have died. Romeo discovers her and kills himself. Juliet awakens from her drug-induced sleep, sees the dead Romeo, and kills herself.

Cast and Crew



Sherry Allen (Witch) is excited to be part of Lex-Ham's Steppin' Out. They are true lovers of the art. Shakespeare would have a belly laugh at our play. Enjoy.



Ashok Bokde (Hamlet) a hyphenated person, is delighted to be appearing in his third Lex-Ham production. He also records and performs music with his band, Wheeler's Cloud. Many thanks to his lovely family for their support!



Ed Burke (Stage Manager) is a youth minister and host of An Extra Glance, a podcast which looks at lesser known aspects of stories from the news and from history. He is producing *Your Motivational Power Hour!*, a spoof of motivational speaking, at this year's Minnesota Fringe Festival. More public speaker than actor, Ed recovered his love for drama as Guy in *Check Please* last fall with the Eagan Theater Company.



Sophia Goodner (Lady Macbeth) is in her first production with Lex-Ham and she couldn't be more excited. She hopes you enjoy this show as much as she does!



Mahmoud Hakima (Othello) has been performing in the Twin Cities as an actor, entertainer and improviser for the last 16 years. He is thrilled to be working with Lex-Ham! Seeing as how Othello has always been his dream role, he hopes this is just the warm-up!



Alice Howard (Witch) is originally from Saint Paul and moved to New York City in 2000 where she had the opportunity to train with the renowned Mary Boyer and John Basil of the American Globe Theatre. She was a member of the Michael Checkov Theatre Company where she played the lead role of Didi in *American Standard*, a new work by David Koch. Alice graduated from LIU-Brooklyn with a double major in Journalism and Dance. This is Alice's first theatre production in the Twin Cities.



John Kunik (Director) has been involved in the Twin Cities theatre scene for nearly 40 years as an actor and director. He has performed with the Children's Theater Company, Park Square Theater, Theatre in the Round, Troupe America, Lakeshore Players, and enjoyed a five-year run of *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding* at Hey City Theatre. John has directed nearly 50 productions including shows for Lakeshore Players, Off-Broadway Musical Theatre, the Phipps Center, the Community Theater of Burnsville (now Applause Community Theater), Grand Marais Playhouse, and Alma College (MI).



Urban Landreman (Producer) has been involved with the Lex-Ham Community Theater since its first production of *The Neighborhood on the Hill* over 20 years ago. My main role is finding lots of talented people for on- and off-stage, ensuring that everyone is on the same page for the vision for the show, giving them the resources needed to bring that vision to life, and then getting out of their way.



Lisette Lilac (Lady Capulet) is thrilled to return to Lex-Ham Community Theater. She has previously performed in *Assorted Spirits*, *The Front Page*, and *Our American Cousin*. She has also performed at the James J. Hill House in Hill House Holidays.



Courtney Marti (Desdemona) is a 25 year-old freelance writer and pet-sitter who earned her double major in theatre and creative writing from Coe College in 2014. She is excited to make her “real world” acting debut as Desdemona in this production of *Our Rotten Town*. Her personal strengths include naming inanimate objects and remembering random facts about animals, and her unavoidable weaknesses include being easily startled (sometimes even by herself) and frequent singing while operating power tools.



Mary Mornes (Gertrude) is thrilled to be back in the theatre after so many years away. An early love of storytelling and literature inspired her to become an English teacher, and the classroom became her main stage for 26 years. The acting bug has been a constant flutter in her hear.



Amanda Oporto (Witch) was last seen on stage in Minnesota History Center’s *If World War I Was a Bar Fight*. She also enjoys working behind-the-scenes and has recently done sound and light board operation at Theatre in the Round. This is her third production with Lex-Ham Community Theater.



Timothy Payton (Polonius) is working with Lex-Ham for the first time. He has been active in local theater for decades. Timothy is currently a full-time student at Concordia University as a Theater Arts Major.



Robert Permenter (Gravedigger) is excited to be working on *Our Rotten Town* with John Kunik, cast and crew! Robert has been on stage at Theater in The Round, Century College, Fringe Festival and other stages in the area. This summer he is working on a feature film and a pilot film for TV. He has written/acted first-person monologues based on historical/biblical figures and fictional characters. He is happy to be a member of the Actors Workout taught by Raye Birk.



Agnes Rzepecki (Juliet) is delighted to be working with Lex-Ham Community Theater again after having performed in the theater’s production of *Antony and Cleopatra* last year.



James Satter (Laertes) is as an actor and improviser from the Twin Cities. This is his first show with Lex-Ham Community Theater.



Bill Solvang (Hamlet's father) is delighted to be appearing in his third Lex-Ham Community theater production having also performed in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *If WW1 Was a Bar Fight*. He has also spent several seasons performing at the Minnesota Renaissance Festival. In his spare time he enjoys white water kayaking and cruising on his Indian Scout Motorcycle. He continues to take acting classes through St. Paul Community Education and hopes to one day go back to school part time to study theater and drama. He sincerely wishes to thank the entire cast and crew for their patience and support.



Brian Tangren (Romeo) is in his second production with Lex-Ham having previously performed in *Antony and Cleopatra*. He has played in other community theater shows and in the Minnesota Fringe Festival. He is happy to be working with a fantastic cast and crew.



Clarissa Van Dale (Ophelia) is 17 years old and currently attends Irondale High School. She has been acting her entire life and plans to attend St. Mary's University of Minnesota. In addition to acting, Clarissa loves singing and playing the piano.



Erin Zoromski (The real stage manager) is a recent graduate from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN with a Master's in Theology and the Arts where her focused "art" was theatre. She is also a graduate from Winona State University in Winona with a Bachelor's in Communication Studies and a minor in Theatre where she has stage managed and assistant stage managed shows there, like *Assassins* (stage manager) and *August Osage County* (assistant stage manager). She has been a production assistant with SteppingStone Theatre's last summer production of *Seussical Jr.* in St. Paul and has been excited to be a part of Lex-Ham Community Theater's summer production of *Our Rotten Town* as their stage manager. In her spare time, she likes to hang out with her friends, watch Netflix, play video games, read novels, and possibly create art of some sort.

Lex-Ham Community Theater

Since its start in 1995, the Lex-Ham Community Theater has striven to achieve its mission of producing quality theatrical experiences by and for the residents of the Lexington-Hamline and surrounding neighborhoods in St. Paul. The company has enhanced the local theatrical scene by

- Selecting lesser-known works by noted playwrights, such as *Soul Gone Home* by Langston Hughes, *The Vegetable* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and *Motomorphosis* by Václav Havel.
- Giving the regional and world premieres of works by local authors, such as *There's Talk in Town* by John Solensten and *Bullets and Beauties* by Urban Landreman;
- Reviving wonderful classics such as *The Women* by Clare Boothe Luce, *Under the Gaslight* by Augustin Daly, and *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller; and
- Winning awards for Outstanding Performance by an Actor (Shad Cooper) and Sound Design (David Lind) at the 2003 and 2005 Minnesota Association of Community Theatres Play Festivals.

The theater offers many opportunities for people to get involved at any level or time commitment. Opportunities range from attending an evening reading of a play written by Shakespeare or which won the Pulitzer Prize in Drama to enrolling in a beginning or advanced acting class.

To get involved contact theater@LexHamArts.org or www.LexHamArts.org/theater

Upcoming events:

Fall 2017 - Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Auditions - 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., July 9, 10, Concordia University-St Paul

June 16 - Classic Comedy Series - *Merrily We Roll Along*

by George Kaufman & Moss Hart

July 11 - Shakespeare Reading Series - *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

Acting classes for Summer 2017 offered jointly with Saint Paul Community Education

Acting for Absolute Beginners

Register on-line at www.commed.spps.org

**Producing a play is possible only with the help and assistance of many people and organizations.
Here are a few that we would like to acknowledge and thank.**

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