

MEASURE FOR MEASURE:
MEASURING MORALITY FOR A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

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Abstract

This paper presents written support material for Severn Thompson's ninety-minute adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* for Shakespeare in High Park's thirty-seventh season. The concept and script edit for the production were based on a number of factors outlined in the following chapters, from historical context, source material, past productions, and contemporary relevancies. Also investigated are the challenges inherent in the script, which have led *Measure for Measure* to be commonly categorized as one of Shakespeare's 'problem plays'. Identifying and embracing the play's ambiguities and contradictions become part of the conceptual approach, while setting the production in an 'alternative now' highlights the issues with which our society continues to wrestle, such as extreme morality, political corruption, gender politics, justice, and mercy. Finally, the paper reflects on the accomplishments as well as the areas for improvement in the production of this complex dark comedy, presented in a unique outdoor venue.

Dedication

To Anne and Paul, and to Chad, Oskar and Elliot.

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Chapter One: Research Paper

Introduction

My thesis project is a ninety-minute production of *Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare that will be presented outdoors as part of Canadian Stage's Shakespeare in High Park 2019 season in Toronto.

Directing any play by Shakespeare is both a privilege and a monumental undertaking that carries with it over 400 years of history and interpretation. *Measure for Measure* has the added distinction of being considered by many to be Shakespeare's ultimate problem play, although it was simply labelled a comedy in its time. In truth, there's nothing simple about categorizing *Measure for Measure*, as it jumps back and forth from bawdy humour to intense psychological drama. It is a dark comedy that flirts with tragedy and is obsessed with the duality of human nature.

A quality of equivocation or a double-ness is embedded into practically each line of the play's text. The title is a perfect example of the multiplicity of meaning found throughout the piece. The term "measure for measure" alludes to both a punishment equal in severity to the crime it answers for, as well as a moderate, thoughtful (measured) approach to justice. Amidst these conflicting interpretations is the play's central question or problem regarding justice and good governance: how to rule and pass judgment when law and human nature are so at odds that even the judges cannot adhere?

My thesis production will be set in a modern-day Vienna to highlight the very real parallels between issues of justice and equality in our present day and those of Shakespeare's 1604 London. In experiencing the play through the lens of what I call an "alternative now", it's my goal to emphasize the relevance of Shakespeare's themes of extreme morality, sexual harassment, contentious laws, corruption, and the ongoing debate between justice and mercy.

When approaching the play as a director, it's crucial to understand the source for the story and to look for clues pointing to Shakespeare's original intentions for the work. Like many of the plays in Shakespeare's time, *Measure for Measure* is a retelling of an older story that developed over a number of years and versions. In this Research Paper, "Origins and Plot Variations" tracks the story's evolution and the significance of Shakespeare's specific choices and adaptation. In "Location", I investigate the choice of setting the play in Vienna and the parallels a 17th century London audience would make to their own city. I take this reflection a step further to look at how the setting can translate to our own Canadian cities in our present time. "Genre" explores the complex use of genre in *Measure for Measure* (as defined by Northrop Frye), that marks it as a new kind of ironic tragedy/comic irony hybrid. Scholar Harold Bloom describes the play as Shakespeare's "death of comedy" (358) and, I would say, a rebirth of a more complex and modern drama that characterizes a contemporary outlook of the world. "Historical Context (1603-04)" investigates the fascinating historical context that brought about such a seismic shift in thinking and perspective during the time that Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure*. The period of 1603-04 was marked with the death of a long-ruling monarch, threats of war, plague, and political divisions that pointed to a deeply uncertain future. "Puritans and Social Conservatives" explores the influence of the extreme moralists both in Shakespeare's time and the present. The Puritan movement, represented in the character of Angelo, was

striving for a new social order that eventually would lead to the closing down of all theatres decades later. Meanwhile, today's Social Conservative movement pushes to return to a glorified moral past that in my production will be demonstrated by the addition of a sermon given by Angelo at the beginning of the play. "The Law (For Poor More Than Rich)" looks at the inherent inequity in the application of the law as explored within the play, in both Shakespeare's and our own time period. The challenges we face in creating a just society—and the enforcement of laws passed in the name of such a society—are reflected in Duke Vincentio's experiment and observations within the play where ineffective laws are set in motion that only prove to punish the poor disproportionately. "Past Productions" reviews some of the production history of *Measure for Measure* to explore the range of interpretations available with regards to the story and characters. Lastly, in "Casting, Gender and Diversity", I examine the implications and opportunities that diverse casting and gender parity provide that will enable my production to fully enter into a 21st century interpretation.

Origins And Plot Variations

There have been many twists and turns in the development of the plot for *Measure for Measure* over a span of at least fifty-seven years. According to Charles T. Prouty, the oldest source identified for the plot of *Measure for Measure* comes in the form of a private letter written in Vienna in 1547 by the Hungarian student Joseph Macarius about an incident taking place near Milan (131). The incident concerns a woman whose husband is sentenced to death for committing a murder. The woman agrees to give up her honour to "the chief justice--called 'the Spanish count'" (Prouty 131) in order to save her husband's life, but the husband is put to death in spite of the arrangement. The wife travels to Milan, demanding redress from Don Ferdinando Gonzaga, who then orders the corrupt count "to marry the widow, to pay her three thousand

ducats as a dowry, and on the following day was executed” (Prouty 131). Whether this report was factual is up for debate. It’s certainly possible and would have been a rare but welcome example of what J. W. Lever describes as “an object lesson in the workings of true justice” (Lever xxxvii). This lesson and story proved very popular across Europe and inspired a number of writers to pen their own versions.

Although the element of mercy and forgiveness had yet to be introduced, themes of corruption, wise rulers and indecent offers were popular literary devices in Europe at this time. As Brian Gibbons points out, “*Measure for Measure* is based on folk-tale materials of an ancient and common European stock: these are the stories of the corrupt magistrate and the infamous bargain, of the disguised ruler, and of the substituted bed-mate” (6-7). I would suggest that mercy and forgiveness would make for another popular Christian theme of the day.

Certainly the Italian writer Cinthio (Giovanni Battista Giraldi) added the element of mercy to his adaptation in his collection of stories titled *The Hecatommithi* (decade 8, story 5, 415, 1565) as well as to his drama, *Epitia*, written afterwards. In Cinthio’s first version of the tale, the heroine, Epitia, saves the corrupt justice’s life at the end of the story by begging the ruler to show mercy towards him. Set in Innsbruck, Austria, it is Epitia’s young brother who is sentenced to death for committing a rape. Epitia is described as being eloquent, an 18-year-old woman educated in philosophy who insists that her brother is young and in love with the woman he defiled and is willing to marry her. After Epitia refuses the Juriste’s sordid offer to stay the execution in exchange for her virginity, she begs her brother to prepare for death. The brother pleads and convinces her to go through with the Juriste’s bargain saying that the man will surely marry her afterwards to save her honour. As in the original, the Juriste orders the brother’s execution right before going to bed with Epitia. The brother’s decapitated body and severed

head are delivered to his sister the following day and Epitia travels to plead her case with the emperor Maximilian. Maximilian is so moved by Epitia's grief that he summons the Juriste and forces him to marry her. Once married, Maximilian orders the Juriste's execution, which is interrupted by Epitia, who begs for his life now that she has accepted him as her husband. The Emperor is moved by her goodness once more and consents to her request, allowing the corrupt Juriste to turn over a new leaf and happily love his good wife for the rest of their days.

In Cinthio's drama, *Epitia*, he adds an Escalus-like secretary who attempts to reason with the Juriste, as well as a captain of the prison who secretly saves the brother's life by substituting a murderer's head in place of the brother's. Other new characters include Angela, the Juriste's sister, and Epitia's aunt Irene, who both appeal to Epitia to beg for her new husband's life, laying the groundwork for the role of Shakespeare's Mariana in a slightly different form (J. W. Lever xl). Cinthio's contribution to the story is extensive as he "brings out its complex intellectual and structural tension" (Gibbons 7). By adding a multiplicity of storylines and perspectives, Cinthio offers a new level of artistry to the plot's narrative.

Next to Cinthio, the British writer George Whetstone has the most influential adaptation which inspired Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. In 1578 Whetstone published *The Right Excellent and Famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra: Divided into Commercial Discourses*. Whetstone adapted Cinthio's story with an English sensibility. As J. W. Lever writes:

Promos and Cassandra displayed the exuberance, variety, and social interests of Elizabethan comedy. [...] [and] added a comic sub-plot drawn from low life, representing the vices of a big city through the persons of Lamia, a courtesan, Rosko, her servant, and their associates, who appear as foils to the relatively innocent Andrugio (xli).

Andrugio, Cassandra's brother, is imprisoned for the crime of a mutually-loving relationship with a woman he intends to marry. Andrugio is saved by the kind goaler, hides in the woods disguised as a hermit and then reveals himself at the end of the play to support Cassandra's request to save her new husband, Promos, the ancient and corrupt governor (Lever xli). It is Whetstone who adds comedy and a parallel underworld storyline that weaves in and out of the original plot to contrast philosophies and brands of justice amongst the different classes.

There's no question that Shakespeare, like his predecessors, borrowed a great deal from the versions that came before, but his additions and omissions prove what a skilled author and dramaturge can do with an existing work. Much of the play's structure follows Whetstone's but the focus is sharper, with the Duke taking a highly active and perhaps questionable role as orchestrator of most of the events. Claudio is now the only prisoner due to be executed, with the exception of long-time prisoner Barnardine. Juliet is now great with child and facing a terrifying future if Claudio is killed. The obstacle for Isabella accepting Angelo's offer is ratcheted up considerably by her now being a strong-minded novice focused on devoting her life to God and the church. There is Mariana and a complicated but familiar bed-trick (similar to the one previously used in *All's Well That Ends Well*) that preserves Isabella's integrity and leaves her available for the enigmatic Duke. Shakespeare's version cleans up Isabella's reputation, spares her from having to marry her abuser and still celebrates the act of mercy and moderation as a moral of the story.

One of the most interesting changes that Shakespeare makes in *Measure for Measure* is in keeping both Isabella and her brother Claudio silent at the end. It has been a popular belief over the years that Isabella's silence in response to the Duke's surprise marriage proposal is equivalent to happily consenting, but this reasoning doesn't hold up under scrutiny. It would be

next to impossible for Isabella to refuse the Duke given the power dynamic, but she would be free and able to speak up if she were thrilled about the offer of marriage. Both Cassandra and her brother were active speaking participants in Whetstone's version, so it appears to be a very deliberate act on Shakespeare's part to keep them silent. It's the intense complexity of these characters, the contradictions, the brutal inequality, the impossible choices, the painful comedy, and the final glaring ambiguous ending that makes this an awe-inspiring world that defies measuring or pacifying.

Location

As if the story of *Measure for Measure* hadn't evolved enough, changes to the narrative may have continued after its performance in 1604. PhD candidate Rachod Nusen wrote,

It is now widely accepted that the text of *Measure for Measure* in the First Folio had undergone a revision by Thomas Middleton in 1621. Because of the characters' Italian names and the emergence of the Dukes of Ferrara in disguise in several plays around 1603 and 1604, Gary Taylor argues that Shakespeare originally set the play in Ferrara and it is Middleton who relocated it to Vienna (12).

Before the First Folio printing, it is possible that Middleton altered the location to highlight the Thirty Years' War that essentially began with the 1620 defeat and exile of King James' daughter Elizabeth and her husband Frederik V from their brief rule in Bohemia. It was a war with Hungary that Britain avoided but was acutely aware of:

If the Duke with the other dukes come not to
composition with the King of Hungary, why then all the
dukes fall upon the king (1.2.1-3).

Measure for Measure's Lucio could be alluding to this war that King James was refusing to enter, much to the disappointment of the puritans, who were pressuring to go to war with the Catholic countries involved, including Hungary. The Middleton theory provides a plausible explanation for the presence of war in the play as well as a reason for the many Italian names in Vienna.

Whether *Measure for Measure* should be set in Italy or Vienna, there are clear references linking this fictional Vienna to the city of London. Much of the play takes place in the suburbs of Vienna which bear some resemblance to the London suburb of Southwark, where the Globe Theatre stood (and has since been rebuilt). It was Old Southwark (or The Borough) where laws were somewhat looser and with less governance, since it fell outside of the London walls. As the *Britannica* explains, Southwark became known as the “Bridge Ward Without or the ward of Bridge-without” (1). It developed a unique reputation, much like Vienna's suburbs in *Measure for Measure*. As the BBC Radio 4 series *Shakespeare's Restless World* described it, Southwark was “the district where theatres, bear pits, cock pits and brothels plied their trade” (MacGregor, Plague and the Playhouse). *Britannica* adds, “It also grew in notoriety for its poorer, run-down districts” (2). Southwark was also home to the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem for the mentally ill, and there were a surprising number of prisons:

[...] the King's Bench and the Marshalsea, both dating back to the 14th century and perhaps earlier, the County Gaol, dating from the beginning of the 16th century, and the House of Correction. [...] In addition there were two other prisons in the immediate neighbourhood, the Borough Compter, kept first on the island site in Borough High Street, where the old parish church of St. Margaret had stood, and subsequently moved to Tooley Street, and the Clink Prison (British History Online).

When the characters from Vienna's suburbs end up in prison, they wouldn't have far to travel if it was anything like Shakespeare's Southwark.

To highlight the large scale of Vienna and its suburbs, as well as that of Angelo's mass arrests, the setting for the production in High Park will represent a modern-day Vienna where the audience will be included peripherally in the action of the play by being addressed as members of the greater community, both in the suburb and in the prison settings. This inclusion of the audience will also serve to implicate them more in the play's narrative, leading them to consider how the story may reflect aspects of their own lives.

Genre

As mentioned earlier, the First Folio categorizes *Measure for Measure* as a comedy while the scholar Harold Bloom labels it "Shakespeare's farewell to Comedy" (358). Bloom proposes the play was the death of comedy, packed with "rancidity" that "seems to purge Shakespeare of whatever residual idealism" he had left (358). When it comes to genres in literature, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (2000) offers a framework to critique and analyse all forms of literature without involving a particular ideology or personal taste. In *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, he claims that *Measure for Measure* is unique in having two separate genres that change halfway through the piece. The first half is identified by Frye as "Ironic Tragedy" which, according to theatre director and guest York professor, Peter Hinton, is Frye's genre where the hero loses innocence, where freedom is the greatest choice and personal will is one's greatest responsibility. These are the choices of Hamlet or Hedda Gabler but also, Frye argues, it's Isabella's choice when faced with Angelo's impossible proposition. Rather than being imprisoned by Angelo's defilement, Isabella must choose freedom, even at the cost of her brother's life.

It's in the moment of the play where all hope for Claudio is lost that the genre changes to "Comic Irony". As Frye explains, "We notice that as we go on we feel less and less like condemning people, because of the steady increase of a sense of irony" (*N.F. on Shakespeare* 147). As the story descends into the Duke's play-within-a-play, where all others are either knowing or unknowing actors following his directive, the sense of absurdity and confusion increases. Frye explains this "Comic Irony" where:

The sense of absurdity about such a comedy arises as a kind of back-fire or recall after the work has been seen or read. Once we have finished with it, deserts of futility open up on all sides, and we have, in spite of the humor, a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic. [...] Its principle is that anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut (*Anatomy of Criticism* 226).

By the end of the play, when the Duke invites everyone back to his palace to celebrate the three marriages (his comedy), Isabella, realizing that she's been manipulated and lied to by her would-be husband, quickly learns to choose silence in the face of such futility and powerlessness.

The shifting genres and the ambiguous ending have made *Measure for Measure* one of Shakespeare's less popular plays, yet at the same time make it such a tempting prospect for a director. It is this very unpredictability and gallows humour that seems so current. Our present culture is well suited for ironic tragedy and comic irony.

Tragedy and tragic irony take us into a hell of narrowing circles and culminate in some such vision of the source of all evil in a personal form. Tragedy can take us no farther; but if we persevere with the mythos of irony and satire, we shall pass a dead center, and finally see the gentlemanly Prince of Darkness bottom side up (*Anatomy* 239).

In Act Five, the Duke inverts the tragedy into a comedy with his play-within-a-play, marrying everyone off in the end in classical comedic form, including himself in a surprise proposal to

Isabella. My production will highlight the ironic absurdity of this marriage proposal, where we see Isabella and Claudio recognize that she is being asked once more to give herself to a man of power for the safe passage of her brother. It is a very modern look at the insidious nature of power and gender dynamics that corrupt, even when a character such as the Duke has the very best intentions (which may primarily serve him).

Historical Context (1603-04)

It is fitting that such an unsettling play as *Measure for Measure* was written during a time of great unrest and doubt. In 1603, poet and playwright Thomas Dekker published his first pamphlet, titled *The Wonderfull Yeare*, which describes a year unlike any other for the city of London. Although the title sounds ironic when considering the tragedies that would unfold, Dekker used the word “wonderfull” for its meaning of the day: “such as to excite wonder or astonishment” (OED 2018). Astonishment would no doubt have been one of the reactions Londoners had to the year of 1603. On April 24th, Queen Elizabeth, the monarch of England and Ireland for close to forty-five years, the Virgin Queen, died without proclaiming an heir to the throne. This date had great significance since the English calendar of that time placed the new year as commencing on April 25th. And so it was on the final day of 1602 that England lost its Queen and the new year of 1603 held terrifying unknowns. For years the English people and government had been uneasy with the Queen’s refusal to produce or name her successor. The relatively new factional strife in the government (Adams 34) and the ongoing tensions between Catholic and puritan interests required a strong ruler and clear succession. Shakespeare’s play *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (1599) appeared to be a sound warning that England, like Rome, could fall into civil war if left without a clear plan for its future (MacGregor, *London Becomes Rome*).

The Queen's illness grew worse in March (1602 according to the old calendar) and on the 19th, theatres and borders were closed while vagrants and Catholics were arrested or deported to prepare for any threats to the state. Despite fears of ensuing chaos, James VI of Scotland was peacefully proclaimed King James I of England on the 24th, only hours after Queen Elizabeth's death. As the diarist John Manningham wrote, "No disorder in the city; every man went about his business as readily, as peaceably, as securely, as though there had been no change, nor any news ever heard of competitors" (Potter 297). King James I appeared to give most people reason for optimism. With a Catholic mother but raised by "a devoutly Presbyterian scholar" (Potter 302), he also brought a royal family to England for the first time in over half a century. With three children and another on the way, England could rest easier knowing that there was now a clear line of succession (Potter 302).

The celebration over King James' accession was short-lived and before he was even crowned, the first case of plague was reported in the borough of Southwark in May and was raging in full force by the particularly hot month of June. Soon after officially taking Shakespeare's company under his own patronage as The King's Men, James had to begin writing proclamations in an effort to contain the scope of the plague while moving to safer ground himself:

You get a strong impression looking at these sheets of a king who is energetically on the case, but is also on the run. He issues the proclamations at a steadily growing distance from the infectious capital: 'Given at our Manor of Greenwich' (MacGregor, Plague and the Playhouse).

Theatres and public houses were shut down for the second time three months later but this time the closure was to last almost a year. The King was crowned quietly in a private ceremony on July 25th and The King's Men remained out of the city to play in safer towns and estates.

Meanwhile, one fifth of London's population (over 30,000 people, including many children) died horribly while the rest lived in terror.

Whether Shakespeare remained in London or not, this was likely the time he would have begun to write *Measure for Measure* with the city and the new King in mind. Unlike Queen Elizabeth, it soon became clear that James I didn't appreciate crowds (Potter 314). Likewise Duke Vincentio is not a man to publicly mingle with his people, telling Angelo in the opening scene of *Measure for Measure*:

I love the people
But do not like to stage me to their eyes:
Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and *Aves* vehement (1.1).

James I also had a mistrust of puritans which the Duke seems to share when questioning Angelo's puritanical and unbending rhetoric. As Conrad Russell writes, "James himself was often inclined to ascribe his troubles to 'puritans', and it may have been he who told the French ambassador that the [parliament] members were '*la plus grande partie puritains*'" (chapter 2, 38). One immediate change at court upon King James' arrival was observed by the Venetian secretary, "Elizabeth's portrait is being hidden everywhere, and Mary Stuart's shown instead with declaration that she suffered for no other cause than for her religion" (Potter 305). A play featuring a Catholic woman prepared to sacrifice her own brother's life for her faith would have presumably induced sympathy from the new monarch who revered his Catholic mother's memory.

The King seemed to believe in pardoning executions beyond his own mother's. As Jennifer Lodine-Chaffey notes, King James arranged for a last-minute pardon to some of the Bye

Plot conspirators who were sentenced to be executed on December 10th, 1603 for plotting to kidnap him:

All of the Main Plotters, save Raleigh, were scheduled to be executed [...] On that day, Markham first walked to the scaffold and told the crowd he was not prepared to die, but still conducted himself as befitting a penitent subject and made ready for execution. At that moment, a messenger from the king arrived and the sheriff told Markham, —You say you are ill prepared to die; you shall have two hours respite. Guards led Markham back to the Tower and brought Grey to the scaffold. Like Markham, Grey offered his scaffold confession and offered prayers for his soul. At the final moment, however, the sheriff told Grey that James had pardoned him and led him back to the Tower hall. Finally Cobham ascended the scaffold, and being unaware of the fact that Grey and Markham had not suffered decapitation, offered final words to the crowd and prepared to die. At that point, the guards brought forth Markham and Grey and the sheriff proclaimed the King's pardon of all three, stating, —see the mercy of your Prince, who of himself hath sent hither a countermand, and hath given you your lives (77n).

This is a perfect example of a Duke Vincentio-like dramatic orchestration of a public test of character among the accused. Professor James Shapiro observes that Duke Vincentio is “an intellectual ruler who, like the new monarch [James I], enjoyed stage-managing how things worked out” (*The Oxford Student*). It's also worth noting Markham's line is similar to Barnardine's when faced with execution, “You rogue, I have been drinking all night; I am not fitted for't” (4.3.42-43). Neither is ready to die.

How much of this representation of the new monarch was descriptive and how much instructive is an interesting question to consider. Was Shakespeare warning against corruption in the government? Only two years earlier in 1601, Queen Elizabeth addressed the government with what was called ‘The Golden Speech’, where she acknowledged that there had been corruption and over-taxing within the governing body of which she was unaware:

Who keepes their Sovereigne from the lapse of error, in which, by ignorance, and not by intent, they might have fallen; what thanks they deserve, we know, though you may gesse. And as nothing is more deere unto us then the loving conservation of our subjects hearts, what an undeserved doubt might we have incurred, if the abusers of our liberality, the thrallers of our people, the wringers of the poore, had not bene tolde us! (National Archives 1601).

This speaks to the Duke's situation who observes in secret to learn how his government represents him in his absence. Perhaps the role of Angelo was written with these corruptions in mind, as a warning for James I to be wary of who he appointed to rule on his behalf throughout the three newly-unified countries. The warning speaks just as loudly to the present day where questionable appointments such as Brett Kavanaugh's to the U.S. Supreme Court were supported due to the appointee's reputation and connections even in the face of serious allegations.

When the London plague had finally passed and the city was deemed safe again, James I at last took part in a highly celebrated return and official procession through the city as the new monarch. Red swaths of material were handed out to decorate buildings throughout the city and five decorative arches were built, each presenting a theme and performance as the King stopped to watch:

The whole spectacle must have been like a Royal Variety Performance reconfigured as Jacobean street theatre and as always, the most important person of all didn't stay long enough. The playwright Thomas Dekker tells us the crowd was disappointed that King James I moved on so quickly, as they had been 'glewed there together so many houres to behold him' (MacGregor, *London Becomes Rome*).

The description of this procession brings to mind *Measure for Measure's* Act Five with the Duke's grand public return to Vienna and his position as head of state.

Puritans and Social Conservatives

As in *Measure for Measure*'s fictional Vienna, England was grappling with its own quest for order with puritans urging the crackdown on licentious and drunken behaviour. The severe puritan character of Angelo and his corrupt behaviour in the play warned Jacobean audiences of the dangers of extreme morality and the hypocrisy that often accompanies it. The pamphleteer Philip Stubbes was one of these puritans, who believed in shutting down theatres as they were places of evil. In 1583, Stubbes wrote his book *Anatomy of Abuses*, which suggested among other things that “anyone guilty of prostitution, adultery, whoredom, or incest should be made to ‘taste of present death’ or be branded ‘with a hot iron on the cheek, forehead, or some other part’” (*The Oxford Student*). In *Measure for Measure*, the cracking down of brothels and all forms of social and commercial liberalism proved prescient for where English politics was heading. Less than two years after *Measure for Measure* was performed for James I came *The Act to Restrain Abuses of Players* (1606), which “prohibited spoken profanity in any dramatic production; it was the most precise and sweeping piece of censorship addressed to the theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries” (Gazzard 495). The puritan influence on theatres and on the private lives of British citizens would steadily increase until England's civil war (1642-51), which saw the execution of James I's son Charles I in 1649.

Religious extremism remains a problem in our present day, although it is now more popularly referred to as the religious right or social conservatism instead of puritanism. Social conservatism is defined by the website Conservapedia as:

Conservative values on non-fiscal matters, such as promoting defense of marriage, opposition to abortion, opposition to homosexuality, and promoting common sense Christian values (https://www.conservapedia.com/Social_conservatism).

Politicians such as U.S. President Trump and Ontario Premier Doug Ford are not themselves particularly religious but both adopted social conservative elements to their platforms and rhetoric to win their elections (Coren, *The Globe and Mail*). Apart from sinners and blasphemers, puritans regarded Catholics and the Vatican as posing the largest threat to their goals. Social conservatives today are predominantly against liberalism, LGBTQ equality and non-white immigration, especially those of other religious faiths. Journalist Michael Coren describes a modern Christian think-tank called Cardus as working towards:

The renewal of “North American social architecture”—very much conservative shorthand. It brings together religious activists, mainly from the Catholic and evangelical right (*The Walrus*).

This concept of a renewal or a return to a racially segregated, Christian, heteronormative patriarchal society of the past is where 17th century puritanism and present forms diverge. Puritanism in 1604 was looking forward: working to implement further reforms and controls in order to create a new moral and god-fearing society. The social conservatives of today appear to be looking back into its past for those same reforms. On July 11, 2018, Doug Ford’s Conservative government repealed the 2015 sex-ed curriculum for Ontario schools, reverting all classrooms in the province to the 1998 curriculum (Alphonso, *The Globe and Mail*), which is a perfect example of reviving the past in the name of reform. It’s interesting that after so many centuries an individual’s sexuality is still such a major concern for the state.

The Law (For Poor More Than Rich)

It cannot be said that our present society has solved all issues of excess. We have a hypersexualized culture, especially within the media, and a gender power imbalance that leads to an alarming number of sexual assaults. Instead of syphilis and the plague, we have HIV and a

deadly Fentanyl crisis that's proving difficult to stop. A current example of a damaging puritanical response to social problems is Mike Harris' Safe Streets and Communities Act, passed in 1999, which essentially criminalizes poverty. Stephen Harper took up the cause federally with Bill C-10 in 2011/12 to the protests of many organizations such as LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) who were concerned about the Angelo-styled hardline approach to sentencing:

Through its imposition of mandatory minimum sentences and removal of judicial discretion with respect to sentencing (thus imposing a 'one size fits all' approach to sentencing), Bill C-10 adopts a formalistic approach to equality that will serve to perpetuate the historic disadvantage of marginalized groups (Track & Birenbaum, LEAF).

Similar to 1604, there is still a wide disparity between the number of poor and disenfranchised who are incarcerated, compared to those from higher income brackets. Now added to the issue of inequality within the justice system is the disproportionate racial demographics in Canadian and American prisons.

Just as Angelo refuses to look at the specifics of Claudio's case before sentencing him to death, so do mandatory sentences rob the justice system of considering the complexities of a given crime and 'criminal'. While Angelo mocks Isabella's proposal to punish the crime but not the perpetrator, Angelo refuses to see how equally absurd it is to punish the crime without even looking at the perpetrator and his particular circumstance. Why is Claudio being sentenced to death, which will leave both Juliet and child without the support he could provide? How does this reflect justice or an ethical outcome? Situations like Claudio's come up constantly within court systems today. The podcast *Serial*, Season 3, investigates the Cleveland criminal court system in 2018 (and possibly 2017). In Episode 02, *You've Got Some Gauls*, Judge Gaul is

recorded during a parole sentencing for a young male defendant named Terrell, after his mother has told the judge that Terrell's son needs him:

Judge Gaul

Right. And that was the other thing. Are you married?

Terrell

No.

Judge Gaul

Are you working?

Terrell

Yes.

Judge Gaul

No, you're not. You're in the county jail. And you've been in the county jail how long?

Terrell

Four weeks.

Judge Gaul

How long?

Terrell

For a month.

Judge Gaul

OK. So when I asked you if you're working, you don't work in a county jail. You don't support your child. And you had a baby at what age?

Terrell

18.

Judge Gaul

18. Was that a smart move?

Terrell

No.

Judge Gaul

That was also a bad decision. Right?

Terrell

Yes.

Judge Gaul

All right. So let's see. Let's just review.

[...]

Judge Gaul

You're on probation to me, and you have more kids out of wedlock that you can't afford to pay for, I'm going to send you right back to the institution (Dzotsi & Koenig, *Serial*).

It's a script that could have been spoken between Claudio and a slightly kinder Angelo. It's not a threat of execution but apparently having a child out of wedlock is still a punishable offence even if it's not in the official law books.

Past Productions

The first and only production of *Measure for Measure* that occurred with certainty during Shakespeare's lifetime took place before the King and family in Whitehall on St. Stephen's Night on December 26th, 1604. However, "a number of allusions in the dialogue suggest that the play was composed and probably acted in the summer season of 1604" (Lever xxx). Very little is known about the play's reception but it's worth noting that there's no record of a royal request for a repeat performance. In 1660, after the return of the monarchy to England with King Charles II, Shakespeare's plays weren't a popular choice. His work was seen as old-fashioned. As Nusen wrote, "John Dryden maintained that 'the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespeare's time'" (91).

Perhaps to make the work more modern or exciting, William Davenant (the self-proclaimed illegitimate son of Shakespeare) set out to “reforme and make ‘them fit for the Company’” (Nusen 92). Davenant’s creation was (ironically, given our Shakespeare in High Park double-bill) a hybrid of *Measure for Measure* combined with *Much Ado About Nothing*, titled *The Law Against Lovers* (Nusen 92), which he presented, packaging them “as a new product and passing them off as his own enterprise” (Nusen 92). The Duke reflects the new King Charles II who returns to England “happily restored to power after the aberrations of Angelo’s Puritan régime” (Nusen 94).

Benedick and Beatrice provide some romantic comic relief as a subplot that replaces most of the lower-world characters and narratives. Beatrice sums up the play’s theme with her line: “The problem is, the deputy is not ‘a proper Prince! he rules / With a rod in’s hand instead of a sceptre’ (3.1.161-162)” (Nusen 96). “The emphasis on Isabella’s compliance with the Duke and the removal of subversive elements would be repeated in many ‘full-text’ productions until the twentieth century” (Nusen 98).

One of the most extreme adaptations and productions of *Measure for Measure* came from Charles Marowitz in 1975, that was inspired by a personal experience of being wrongfully arrested and charged as a “suspected person with intent to commit an arrestable offence” (Nusen 112), merely because of how he was dressed. Marowitz rewrote large parts of the play by rearranging the text, giving lines to different characters under different contexts. Marowitz explained his intention with the work:

What concerns me is the traditional morality of *Measure for Measure* tested in a contemporary society where Watergate-styled corruptions are often the rule and not the exception. I wanted the audience to be angry with the Duke, Escalus, and Angelo in a way that Shakespeare’s narrative would never permit (Nusen 112).

His production was relentless in the Duke and Angelo's corruption, without any real ambiguity. Reviewer Michael W. Shurgot writes about Marowitz's 2000 production of his *Variations on Measure for Measure* performed at Tygres Heart Shakespeare Company in Portland, Oregon, where all "vestiges of virtue" are cut:

What remained was a stream of physical and psychological sexual violence directed at Isabella, from her initial appearance at the nunnery to the final, terrifying stage image (73).

The final image is one where Isabella tries to escape, then is blocked and about to be attacked by Angelo, Lucio and Claudio (Shurgot 74). As if Isabella didn't have a hard enough time in the play as it was originally written.

There have been famous productions, including a lavish one by Peter Brook, an intimate version directed by Trevor Nun (Nusen 186) and an interesting recent production by London's *Cheek by Jowl*, set in Russia with Russian actors and English subtitles (Dow, *The Guardian*). There are very few directed by a woman. Donmar Warehouse's former Artistic Director Josie Rourke directed *Measure for Measure* in September 2018 with a deeply-edited version that was then played twice over, with the actors playing Angelo and Isabella switching roles halfway through. Michael Billington writes in his review:

What if the roles were reversed? That is the question posed in the second half, when Atwell's Isabella is in government and Lowden's Angelo is her prey. The problem is that the situation doesn't make much sense. Rather than being a young Catholic priest, as would have been entirely believable, Lowden's Angelo is seen as part of a mysterious religious cult that improbably imposes a vow of chastity (Billington, *The Guardian*).

The production sounds fascinating but the review touches on the dangers of bringing the story too sharply into a contemporary context.

Casting, Gender and Diversity

Along with Liza Balkan (who will be directing *Much Ado About Nothing* in repertory with *Measure*), it's our goal to have a multicultural cast and gender parity which will, at times, require adapting traditionally male roles into female ones and exploring what that alteration offers to the storytelling. Escalus in a modern context is reminiscent of Hillary Clinton, a highly qualified advisor to the Duke who is overlooked as the obvious choice to rule Vienna as deputy for the more hardline, reformist Lord Angelo. The Clinton reference aside, Escalus as a qualified woman hitting a glass ceiling and losing out to a less qualified and perhaps even dangerous man should resonate with our audiences in High Park. Who will miss the parallels of Doug Ford's last-minute meteoric ascent to becoming premier of Ontario, overshadowing promising female candidates with his populist agenda (although hardly a puritanical one).

Even for the play's traditional female roles such as Julietta and Mariana, I'm interested in developing them into fully-dimensional characters instead of meek and almost apologetic plot devices. In the original text, Julietta enters with Claudio but remains silent even when spoken about in third person by her common-law husband. Perhaps there is some meaningful context for her silence but based on Juliet's short scene in Act 2, Scene 3 with the Duke/Friar, she comes across as an active and self-determined participant in her relations with Claudio. I've highlighted this assumption by assigning to Juliet some of Claudio's explanation of their shared plight:

Claudio

Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietas bed,
You know the Lady, she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the true pronouncement lack.

Juliet

This we came not to, only for a Dowry

Remaining in the Coffers of family friends,
From whom we thought it best to hide our Love
Till Time had made them for us.

Claudio

But it chanceth the stealth of our most mutual entertainment
With Character too gross, is writ on Juliet.

Lucio

With child, perhaps?

Claudio

Unhappily, even so.
And the new Deputy, now for the Duke,
Awakes me all the enrolled penalties
Which have (like un-touch'd Armor) hung by th'wall
So long, that nineteen Zodiacks have gone round;
And for a name now puts the Law on me:

Juliet

'Tis surely for a name.

Lucio

I warrant it is: Send after the Duke, and appeal to him.

Juliet

We have done so, but he's not to be found (1.2.134-165).

This sharing of lines will also read as a more modern relationship, as it would be difficult to accept that a young woman who has chosen Claudio as her lover would be so ashamed of having sex before marriage. Even more than a full character, I see Juliet and her situation of bringing a new life into this troubled society as central to the questions that the play raises. What provisions will be there to support this child as s/he navigates through the moral world from a place of poverty and incarceration even before birth?

The play contains many examples of disguise and role-playing which will also become part of the character exploration. The Duke is the most obvious example of hiding in disguise, but characters such as Lucio and Pompey can also enjoy multiple looks and perhaps a suggestion

of gender fluidity. Both Lucio and Pompey present themselves differently depending on their audience and circumstance. Once Pompey (now female) has been sent to prison, she's offered a position as an executioner's assistant, to which she quickly adapts:

Sir, I have been an unlawful bawd time out of
mind, but yet I will be content to be a lawful
hangman (4.2.14-16).

Lucio meanwhile works at being everyone's best friend unless someone more powerful is present. While the Duke's role-playing is for his own curiosity and investigation, both Lucio and Pompey are master performers out of necessity; at times their lives depend on it.

Research Conclusion

Interestingly enough, there has been a recent resurgence of *Measure for Measure* productions in Toronto and elsewhere. It appears that the themes of power, sexual harassment, moral flexibility, poverty, and hypocrisy are sadly more relevant than ever. Approaching this Jacobean play with innovation, and a thorough understanding of its original context, will ideally offer audiences a powerful reflection of our present societal dilemmas and ambiguities.

Chapter Two: Director Journal Excerpts

Monday, January 28, 2019: Design Meeting

Had a really productive follow-up meeting with Set Designer Joanna Yu over Skype this afternoon. Liza Balkan and I met with her last week, where she offered two strong proposals for our shared set. We've decided on one that creates an additional level on stage right that we're calling a catwalk. It's a walkway that stands at about five feet above the stage where an actor can walk from the stage right staircase almost to centre stage. It's a terrific asymmetrical addition to the space with the centre archway shifted a little stage left. I've requested that there be a way to climb up and down from the centre stage end of the walkway for fun. There's a certain level of chaos to represent Vienna both before the clampdown on illicit activities and then afterwards with the arrests. There's a public feel to the location that might make it a good place to have Claudio and Juliet presented by Provost when they're first arrested. This also could be an interesting level to play with for the trial scene later in Act 5.

Today Joanna added the detail of hinges to the iron gates, two at the centre (one can work as a door while the other could serve as a moving wall or divider, possibly for the prison visit) and a double gate on downstage left. A third gate on stage right would be decorative and not move. These iron gates bring more of an Old-World feel than the slightly futuristic black screens from the other design option, but we can use props and costumes to bring out more contemporary references. I like having a slightly futuristic time period that is tied to its past and the Church. It's important that the audience identifies with the time period to highlight just how relevant Shakespeare's story is four centuries after he wrote it.

My concept for setting is a little dystopian, similar in nature to the framework for *A Handmaid's Tale* as a possible near-future for us. This Vienna is a city with a past, that has

experienced freedoms but that has also, in some respects, gotten out of control. I really hope to find a quality of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for the suburbs where Mistress Overdone and Pompey operate. I want there to be a sense of fun but also an awareness of a hard lifestyle where lives are lost to addiction and violence. Joanna has found a place for the graffiti on a corrugated surface on the stage right side of the set which should help to create this world. We also spoke of a standing bar to represent Overdone's place but it would need to be something that moves on and off fairly quickly. I miss the possibilities offered by the screens in the alternate design to show the sexual adventures going on behind walls or framed for sale in windows, but hopefully we'll find a way to show the sexual side of the city that both Angelo and Isabella reject.

Also new at this meeting were details about the banners that will hang down from the lamp posts along the walls. Not sure yet which colour to make the Duke's and which to use for Angelo. Red is the first impulse for the religious Angelo, which is certainly an important colour for the Catholic Church. It's also a colour used by Nazis, communists AND the Liberals. Very popular choice. I'm more concerned about the association with Nazis, being in Vienna, but really everyone and their dog uses red. It's an effective colour (my favourite, in fact) and contains possible violent undertones, which isn't a bad thing for Angelo's new order. Joanna didn't like the idea of orange because of the NDP connection, which made me laugh. You never know what a design choice might lead to. The colour for the Duke at this point is a blue which would be present at the start of the show and then the banners would be turned around to reveal Angelo's colour once he starts to run the city.

As for the office of the Duke and Angelo, we're not sure how much is needed to identify it. The Duke's on his way out in the first scene and only needs a surface to pack up his things—I'm thinking of situating his room on the larger square platform on stage left. I can imagine

Angelo sitting but I don't know about a desk or table. A desk eats up playing space and can trap actors into seats for longer than I'd like. A table may also interrupt the flow between scenes when bringing it on and off the stage.

As for props, the most popular items in the play are letters and keys. The Duke seems to be constantly handing out letters or writing new ones to set his plans in motion. At the moment, we're looking for a way to have a huge number of letters arrive for the final scene in Act 4 when Angelo and Escalus are trying to make sense of the number of contradictory instructions being sent to them by the Duke. Do they fall onto the stage individually, making a mess, or do they arrive in a single giant pile? Does the mess of letters help set the stage for Act 5 or would it get in the way? To be continued...

Wednesday, May 15: Exercises and Table Work

The Predictive Text Exercise worked really well in engaging the cast, as did a simple name game of naming someone while walking over to them in the circle. The game gets tricky as the pace picks up which had everyone laughing and getting quite involved. I also had them simply move/freestyle dance to different pieces of music individually, in pairs and then in two larger groups to introduce movement into the work. A successful day in finding a balance of interplay between study and play, the cerebral and the physical.

Friday, May 17: Table Work

Table work is an interesting process to navigate. It's a long time to sit and some people chose to stand behind their chairs with a music stand instead of remaining in their seats. Directing Mentor Peter Hinton observed via Skype for a portion of the day and I was so grateful for the outside eye. Running the table work and offering my own interpretation for hours made

me become self-conscious of my own voice, and I began to question whether I was being dynamic enough in my delivery, was I being clear in my explanations? Peter had some feedback which was really helpful. One of the important points Peter made was that it's best to avoid using a term like "It's not clear" when talking about a piece of text or a section of plot in the story. This begins to sound like we think Shakespeare made a mistake or oversight. It's a much more useful perspective to see all of the choices in the play as deliberate even when they are contradictory or mysterious in nature so that these qualities can be embraced rather than solved as problems. In *Measure for Measure*, there are a great number of these mysteries, which are the very elements that make the play unique and thought-inducing.

Sunday, May 19: Field Trip

1-3pm: table work (the day shared with *Much Ado*) followed by a trip to High Park to explore the space. Super-packed with people and cars in the park. Had to walk in. The park itself is its own community and event with blossoms, photo sessions, family picnics, and dog walks. Fantastic to see the cast explore the stage. It seems much larger and further away from the audience without the balcony, stairs, and the rest of the 'theatre' installed, but so magical already.

Thursday, May 23: Secondary Rehearsal

Worked on Act 2, Scene 3: Juliet's prison scene with Provost and Friar/Duke. We began to explore the possibility of Juliet being in active labour when the disguised Duke meets her. It certainly ups the stakes for everyone and leaves Provost truly overwhelmed. Also, it brings out parallels to stories in the news right now of families and children being separated in prison.

1.1 - Developed more the opening sermon with Christopher Morris as Angelo, finding the best approach to charming the audience before showing any sign of extreme religious sentiments.

4.1 - We experimented in shortening the section where Isabella and Mariana 'walk aside' to cut down on the amount the Duke has to say during this time. If it's too quick then it can become absurd, but the Duke's original text isn't very relevant to the story so cutting it would be preferable. We discovered the surprise that Isabella experiences when she discovers that the Duke has left the job to her of explaining the bed-trick plan to Mariana.

Props - I saw the prototype for the cage masks used to censor Isabella and other prisoners arrested under Angelo. Although interesting looking, the covering of the subject's nose isn't quite right. There was concern that it looks too cat-like without the nose coverage but with it, it reads like the person becomes neutral and robot-like as opposed to someone with a strong personality who is censored.

Friday, May 24: Rehearsal

Prologue - Terrific physical exploration involving the whole cast, assigning the Duke an entourage to follow him around. Exploring what it is to go from a private leader to the publicly adored Duke. The exercise ended with Allan Louis sitting/lying on the ground surrounded by everyone—it was gorgeous.

1.4 - Isabella and Francesca, then Lucio, who is both completely besotted by Isabella and still must convince her to save her brother. 'Who is Lucio?' This is plaguing Emilio Vieira right now. He isn't sure whether Lucio is smart and as knowledgeable as he seems, or is really dense in confessing his sins to the Friar/Duke. What I keep coming back to is the description of Lucio as a 'fantastic' which is defined as 'an event'. Lucio the event will do whatever it takes to look out for himself and, most importantly, to be at the centre of attention.

2.1 - Lucio again as the high roller. He deals with a lot of money: making it and spending it. Does he frequent Mistress O's because of the child that he has to financially support?

I decided to make the move and have the Isabella scene (1.4) played before the Duke and Friar Thomas scene (1.3) and it already feels better. This order naturally leads one scene to the next, working particularly well at the end of 1.3 when the Duke speaks of Angelo, saying he will keep an eye on his rule of Vienna, now followed immediately by the chaos of 2.1 with Angelo holding to his plan, saying "We must not make a scarecrow of the law".

Sunday, May 26: Rehearsal

Sunday and the end of our second week into rehearsals! I love the secondary days. They feel like a bonus time with less pressure to accomplish anything staging-wise or in making concrete decisions. We can take more time to simply explore, ask questions, and experiment with specific moments. I sometimes feel that I get more done, at least on a meaningful level, with the scene work. I began the day with a one-on-one with Natasha Mumba where we discussed Isabella's age and how prone that stage of life is to idealism and harsh judgment of others who fall short of their high standards. At least that was my personal experience and something I've noticed from some people in their late teens and early 20's. It feels right for Isabella to have set her expectations so high that few people meet them. Even when we first meet her, the convent seems to be falling short of her expectations.

Pompey time - Exploring extra text that could be useful in identifying the audience as prisoners. There are still cuts to be made but this is one area that needs a little more to further my goal of having the audience actively incorporated into the world of the play. If Pompey can

identify individuals in the audience as friends of theirs and fellow prisoners, hopefully the whole audience will identify as being part of the world Pompey has found themselves in.

Looked at Pompey and Mistress Overdone's scene with drugging Mistress O while packing. My goal with the Rob Ford-like crack moment is to keep the characters from seeming like the happy whores who have no real issues. The trick is to show that life isn't glorious for them, to be real without being too much for the park audiences. This play in a non-family-friendly setting can go much further into the darker unhealthy side of this underworld that has the Duke so concerned in the first place. It's curious that Shakespeare has people joke about disease but offers no room to show it. Given the times when the audiences were overly familiar with the plague, it wasn't necessary, I suppose. In a more intimate setting, it would be interesting to bring that presence of illness into the piece more, a suggestion as to why the Duke and others would be so consumed with thoughts of mortality and morality.

In rehearsals, speaking with Natasha and Richard Lam about Isabella and Claudio and their relationship as siblings, I brought up the idea that they were adopted, which is why they don't look like biological siblings and this offered interesting insights into their relationship to each other as well as to their deceased father. We imagined that the father, who has this respectable reputation, may have been a religious figure who chose (along with his wife) to adopt internationally, adding pressure to the expectations that the parents had for their children that Isabella met and Claudio possibly suffered under. In noting that Juliet also seems orphaned, with only 'friends' holding decisions over her dowry, we came upon the backstory that all of their parents died in the last plague outbreak, which often hit certain age groups harder than others. This could very well be the unspoken trauma that the Duke is looking to heal the city from. It's

a powerful idea of a generation that collectively lost their parents just as they were about to enter adulthood.

Tuesday, June 18: Rehearsal and Stumble-Through

3.1 - with Claudio and Isabella, after a one-on-one session with Richard the previous rehearsal day (Sunday), focusing on staying away from too much tension, which was making the moment more about Claudio panicking than about the true horror of death that he imagines and describes. Limiting his gestures to one instead of on every separate thought also helped to focus the work.

Stumble/Work-Through - It was a big step to have a handful of new people in the room, which bumped some of the cast into nerves but also helped them really play the scenes, especially the two Isabella/Angelo scenes. Natasha found some vulnerability and even a little positivity. Christopher tapped into the positivity as well in professing his love. Exciting to see this come together.

The Isabella and Claudio scene began well and then Richard tried blowing up at Isabella during the “Death is a fearful thing” speech. Richard said that he needed to try releasing the pent-up emotion, which I can understand, but it was hard to watch after the work we had done in the morning. I said that the result was that the moment just became about him shouting at her instead of using the text to genuinely try and convince his sister to help him. Natasha said that it helped her to be upset at him and curse him—of course it did—but Isabella’s not upset because she’s being verbally abused, she’s upset at the sacrifice he’s asking her to make. Hopefully now that they’ve tried this other version, they can return to the scene we had been developing together.

Act 5 is coming together nicely, although the final choral piece isn't quite working yet. The singing has to slow down and, as a group, they must find a reliable way to maintain the pace, but I think it can work. I was able to share some acting notes but ran out of time so emailed the rest.

Worked sound and light levels in the park in the evening and speaker proximity was a real issue. Feedback started to be triggered at 6 feet and worked down to 3 feet from the speakers, but Sound Designer Richard Feren said that it was only possible to be that close if the personal volume of the actors was turned down. We discussed having monitors/speakers set on the truss but they weren't weight-bearing enough to support them. We can't afford to lose so much playing space downstage. I spoke to Director of Production Elissa Horscroft about the possibility that a platform could be built in front of the stage to give the actors a little more distance from the speakers. Elissa was great in reassuring me that something would be eventually worked out.

Thursday, June 20: First Day in the Park with the Cast

Getting into mics, and the weather was better than originally forecast. The first 90 minutes worked well, with the exception of confirming that there's a large section of the downstage where we can't have actors speak due to feedback from the speakers.

Some of the cast questioned what their motive was for the opening song. I explained that they were playing their characters, coming together for the festival of Carnival. I needed to offer something specific, but at the same time I see all of them as characters who aren't fully functional at the top of the play, which is perhaps a difficult state to play. I find myself not as concerned with their individual motivations but in seeing them as a whole, as the combined populous of the city, as different individuals but all affected by the inclinations of those who

rule. The dissonant harmonies represent their differences, working to create something even more beautiful and strong. Maybe those larger-lens concepts aren't easy for actors to play. Need to check with Peter about this.

We started in on restaging the play to fit the actual stage in the park. The upstage areas didn't seem too far back for action happily. I enjoy using the mid-levels on the set as well as the audience area. The rehearsal hall can barely contain the size of the stage so it's wonderful to finally move people around the real space, and there is space to play in. We did some fights with Fight Director Simon Fon as it began to rain after supper break. Then the rain got harder and we moved to the green room tent which is new and great looking, but began to leak heavily, so we moved into the trailer.

I first finished my notes from the Tuesday run, which were received well. I have to do cuts as the timing for the run came in at 1:43. Artistic Director Brendan Healy suggested 15 minutes for the trim, so I asked if anyone had some offerings and a few did, which was helpful. When I began to propose some other edits, I started to understand how impossible it would be to decide editing choices as a collective exercise. People are just too invested in their characters and text, which is terrific, but means I'll have to make the editing decisions on my own (or with Associate Artist Desirée Leverenz) and then give them the changes to adapt to. We then did a line-run in the trailer, where I was able to take note of possible cuts. Even without mics, we had to stop early to give time for the crew to close everything down for 10pm. It's remarkable how fast the eight-hour call goes by, with about an hour taken out for getting in and out of mics twice a day (they come off for dinner break). It was dark and muddy on the way out at 9:50pm but spirits were high. They had already had a huge BBQ dinner break in spite of the rain.

Thursday, July 4: First Preview

Well, I expected a fairly small audience for the first preview, similar to the one I was at for *Romeo and Juliet* last year at this time. Maybe it was the good weather but there were over 300 in the audience(!), which was such an exciting experience for everyone. There were some late entrances but overall it went really well for a first pass. I sat in the upper section for the first time (beside the booth) and experienced how distant it felt from the grassy area at the front of the stage where I've set some of the action. Not sure if this is worth changing since it works so well for those in the main seating area. I'm still trying to see if there's enough momentum in Acts 3 and 4 with all of the Duke's planning or if the play stalls—I should know more after another preview. What was encouraging to see was the audience reaction in Act 5 when they applauded when prompted by the Duke as he approached them during the procession. They applauded a second time when the Duke was up on the balcony with Angelo and Escalus, which produced the feeling of a truly public event. Being in the upper area also distanced me from the bulk of the audience, so it was tricky to hear them, but I believe there were some interesting responses to the plot-twists in Act 5 as well as to Lucio's interjections. They clearly reacted to the Duke's proposal to Isabella, which was terrific, and allowed Louis (as the Duke) to drive the rest of the play to the end with confidence and humour, embracing the strangeness and contradictions.

There are many moments in the play to work on but I think this was an excellent boost for the actors to help them commit to the show, knowing that the audience is along for the ride. Hopefully it won't be too hot on Saturday for rehearsals. This afternoon was extremely hot and we couldn't spend much time on the deck without taking water and shade breaks. Some actors were really feeling the heat although everyone was trying their best. Key areas to work on are

Elbow's first arrest with the rope business to pick up the momentum and chaos in the scene, the Angelo/Isabella scenes to review intentions, and a clean-up of the curtain call.

Chapter Three: Epilogue

There are a multitude of elements to examine in considering the success or failure of a single production. Overall, I feel that my thesis production of *Measure for Measure* was successful in conveying much of my vision for the play and in uniting the company of actors in a unique world that engaged the audience.

One of the major goals I had for the production was to create a comprehensive re-imagined city-state of Vienna that took place in a fictional 2019. To start with, I needed an inventive set that would invite the audience to recognize a contemporary setting while also sparking their imagination to accept a slightly fictionalized society of Duke Vincentio's Vienna. This Vienna is a little more Eastern European in its culture, further declined in its economics, more isolated from its neighbouring states, and even stronger in its ties to the Catholic Church.

Set and Prop Designer Joanna Yu did a terrific job in transforming the High Park stage into not only one but two contrasting worlds of the two plays presented in repertory at the park: an urban *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing* set in upscale cottage country. Joanna took the traditionally symmetrical stage structure with identical staircases and landings on each side, added an additional level on stage right, and expanded the original platform size on stage left, replacing the usually wide staircase on stage left with a narrow staircase beside the platform. To help characterize the world of *Measure*'s Vienna, steeped in traditional Catholicism, Joanna added a central opening (set slightly off-centre) with a wrought iron gate and other gate details at both sides of the stage. The gates were useful in establishing entrances into new spaces and suggested locations that could be both interior or exterior: prisons, convents, palaces, as well as a gated city. While I wasn't originally a fan of the traditional lattice work walls of the High Park stage, their presence worked well with gates in conveying the theme of imprisonment. To accentuate an urban society divided into groups of haves

and have-nots, one side of the set featured corrugated panels covered in graffiti while the other side had similar panels painted a cleaner light grey to mark the locations of both church and palace.

All of the set elements were invaluable in bringing out an environment rife with tension between order and disorder, power and disenfranchisement, as well as being flexible enough to suit the play's multiple locations. One area I would change if given the opportunity was the quality of the central gate. As much as I liked the look of the gate, it was built out of wood which made it challenging to read as a heavy structure when opened and closed. It might have worked better if it could have had some kind of metal hardware that offered a heavier sound when it closed. We placed sound effects over the closing of the gate at times but it seemed to highlight the lightweight quality of the gate instead of masking it. Adding sound to the gate also presented a challenge of deciding when to accompany the opening and closing with a heavy sound effect and when not to.

The sparse furnishings for the set were essentially two small benches that were used as seats in Overdone's bar, in Angelo's office, on Mariana's grounds, as well as in the prison. During rehearsals, I wasn't sure if these benches would have enough of a presence on such a large stage but in the end, I was pleased with how well the pieces served the scenes they were needed for without becoming too cumbersome or distracting to move during the many changes in location. I was also happy with the prison location, created without obvious set pieces of bars or barriers, but only with lighting and the placement of the two benches facing each other, with guards standing in the background. The minimalist quality of the set and prop design made it easy to imagine austere locations such as prisons and puritan offices as well as outdoor locations of streets and squares.

Costumes by Michelle Bohn were successful for the most part in finding fashion that was both identifiably contemporary but also referenced an imagined culture. Although I thought Isabella's costume served the play and accentuated her youth, it was more school-girl than I had hoped. The

colour blue seemed to be a good way to differentiate her as a novice and not a full-fledged nun but the bold colour we selected seemed to speak more of Girl Guides or school uniforms. We adjusted Isabella's costume slightly during dress rehearsals by changing her veil to white from the blue, which helped to break away from the school-look a little and speak to the importance of chastity in her vows as a novice. I would have liked to have found a more compelling habit that, though modest, spoke to an underlying sensuality similar to some early 20th century fashion, such as found in some of Austrian painter Gustav Klimt's subjects, dressed in high-necked dresses. In a second attempt, I would try a floor-length dress as well as the high-neck, built with a lighter fabric (if it could withstand a long run) to help achieve this Old-World sophistication. This kind of coverage brings up another challenge in the park, which is the extreme heat that the actors must perform in. *Measure* proved to be a difficult play for costumes in respect to heat since so many of the characters (such as friars, nuns and city leaders) were heavily dressed, but I'm not sure there was an effective solution to that issue.

One area of my concept that I was very pleased with was the choral arrangement that Sound Designer Richard Feren composed, influenced by traditional Slavic choral songs. For me, there was something about the dissonant harmonies that spoke of Old-World traditions and intense passions. The bold choice of notes also came across to me as a metaphor for the disparate group of characters in Shakespeare's Vienna that come together in *Measure for Measure* to create such a unique society and story. With a limited budget for coaching, I was able to obtain the assistance of Choral Director Alan Glassar to work with the cast on two separate occasions, helping them to embrace the dissonant and 'spicy' (Alan's term) harmonies. My ideal would have been to have more time with Glassar and Feren in order to bring a larger presence of this kind of music into the production, but I was keenly aware of not asking too much of Richard and the cast, especially without more help from Alan.

In retrospect, I would have insisted on having Mariana's song written with a similar Slavic feel. I had initially thought that Mariana would go heavier with her musical style for her song to reflect the heartbreak that she was living with, but as Rose didn't play an instrument and I wanted to keep her isolated as a character, my next choice was a karaoke-style accompaniment for a rock ballad. Although Rose was entertaining with her karaoke take, the feedback from both Artistic Director Brendan Healy and Directing Mentor Peter Hinton made it clear that this style of song didn't really have a place in the play. Following a post-run discussion in the park with Peter, who suggested cutting the song altogether, I asked the musically-talented actor Richard Lam to try accompanying Rose on a ukulele which was being used in *Much Ado*. To avoid confusion from Richard's presence in Mariana's household, I had him sitting on a bench next to Mariana facing upstage as a hired musician, which also helped to keep the illusion of her being alone. The simplicity of this acoustic approach to the song turned out to be a much stronger choice for illuminating Mariana's feelings for Angelo and the heartbreak of her situation. A guitar was chosen for the best sound to accompany the song and Mariana was able to enter with a lantern instead of a microphone, which made her much easier to accept as a new character who appears for the first time in Act 4. I also gave Mariana an appearance on the balcony in Act 3 as the Duke describes her to Isabella, to help introduce the character. These are examples of slight shifts to an approach that made a huge improvement in how they were received. In hindsight I've realized that I should have taken another step in the last-minute changes and asked Richard Feren to adjust some of Mariana's notes to bring out a Slavic influence in the song. Using some of this traditional sound in Act 4 would have helped to continue this cultural tone, which would have been a more effective tie-in to the final choral piece at the end of the play. Feren showed initial resistance to most alteration requests I made, which influenced my choice to avoid asking him at all, but I believe it would have been worth the discomfort to bring Mariana's

song into the same musical world as the other pieces. Feren was almost always able to come around to my suggestions of change and achieved very effective adjustments, but required time to process the ideas before he would agree to explore it. It was a good lesson for me to identify when a concept is worth changing or fighting for, even in the final days of tech. In fact, sometimes the momentum of a final push of a production to open can allow for certain ideas to be realized that were initially deemed impossible, such as using an acoustic guitar in the park.

Lighting design was an interesting element to explore in this outdoor production, given that it had such a minimal presence in the first half of the play in July. Revisiting the play in August revealed much stronger lighting earlier in the play, that helped to bring more focus to the Angelo/Isabella scenes and Juliet's prison visit. It was a powerful effect to experience night falling as Angelo's Vienna descends into chaos while his very own ethics become corrupted. By the time Pompey and Abhorson call on Barnardine to bring her to be executed, the lower depths of the prison had a genuine feel of an old-school dungeon. One of my favourite set and lighting effects came in the form of street lights installed along both sides of the stage (three on each side) that used LED lights and could change colour. Even in July, the Duke's public return with a procession in Act 5 was amplified with a bold lighting design, saturating the stage in his trademark royal purple. Another effective design piece was using traditional-looking lanterns and lighting them with a white LED glow to create a truly Old-World/New-World look.

Lighting Designer Rebecca Picherack had the advantage of previously working in the park and was able to make the best use of the lights that we had available to us. She was able to effectively carve out different areas of the stage and to reinvent other areas to represent a wide variety of spaces. Given the large distance of the front lights to the stage, some of the lighting washes were not strong enough to illuminate the actors as much as we would have liked, but as the production

moves into mid-August, Picherack will adjust the lighting levels and I expect all of the lighting earlier in the play to have more effect under darker skies.

As the onstage creator of the play, the Duke is the most perplexing character, whose motivations are a mystery. I offered some clues in the production for his need to test both Angelo and his city but avoided being overexplanatory. I didn't want to lose the Duke's mystery altogether. Allan Louis was terrific casting for the Duke, with natural authority and charisma, convincing as both a private and a public personality. I believe the production avoided the trap of having an all-knowing, god-like leader calmly controlling everyone from a distance with almost no character failings of his own. This is an effect that I had seen before and it seemed incongruous to the rest of the world the Duke inhabited. As my mentor Peter Hinton had stressed early on, "The Duke is Vienna and Vienna is the Duke". If something is wrong with the city-state, then something is wrong with him. Through the rehearsals we discovered a mid-life crisis of sorts that is driving the Duke: we see him step out of a disguise and begin to pack while listening to Angelo's public sermon, which he then turns off. He considers taking medication, but then returns the pills to the bottle. Allan and I came to the choice that this medication represents his own personal addiction and corruption that he is hoping to rid both himself and the state of. The Duke's manic drive that follows him through the play is either a result of this withdrawal from medication or a euphoric state of a born-again who has experienced a transformation. Whether or not the audience sees and understands this brief moment the Duke has with his medication at the top of the play, it feels clear that the Duke is somewhat manic in nature and, although he has good intentions for Isabella and his city, his primary focus ends up being more on himself and his own personal journey to fortify his position as a benevolent dictator of Vienna. The Duke is not above inadvertently missing the boat altogether when considering the best way to help Isabella. In the end, I hope that the audience walks away with an appreciation for the

Duke's brand of justice mixed with mercy and rehabilitation, while understanding the complexity and the persistent nature of injustice and inequality.

For the most part I was pleased with the staging, bringing the action close to the audience, sometimes into the actual seating area. The stairs onstage and the higher levels were more of a challenge to use effectively in the play. Peter Hinton warned of the dangers of spending too long on the balcony and platforms and offered the useful suggestion of using the upper level for movement and stage pictures to keep the space alive without losing the clarity of characters speaking text. It was interesting to experience the play from different levels in the audience and to see how important it was to keep that upper level dynamic. If given the chance to use the space again, I would work to find even more ways to keep the upper areas engaged and moving throughout the story.

One of the key areas of *Measure for Measure* are the two meetings between Isabella and Angelo, that show Angelo falling into an obsession with Isabella and his attempt to corrupt her by offering her brother's life in exchange for her virginity. It was always my wish to explore the attraction that these two puritanical characters felt for each other in spite of Isabella's understandable horror at the situation and refusal of his offer. I wanted the complication of their feelings to highlight the messy, contradictory nature of the whole play and our world in general. Although there were times in rehearsal that we were able to touch on this attraction that the two characters were feeling for each other, it consistently got lost in Isabella's drive to save her brother. Natasha is such a powerful performer, who brought an outstanding strength and absolute faith to the role that resonated so well with the vision I had for Isabella. What was more of a challenge was for Natasha to consistently show Isabella's uncertainty, joy, vulnerability, and unwanted desires. I'm in no way suggesting that it's easy to play all of these shades at the same time as arguing for a brother's life, but it's the goal that I would still like to aim for. The strength and clarity of Isabella's argument was incredibly

effective in the final act, when she publicly accused Angelo and spoke to both the Duke and the audience, calling for justice. Natasha played Isabella in Act 5 with the energy of an activist nun that I envisioned, inspired by the passion of real-life gun control advocate Emma Gonzalez, who, although not a nun, shows the raw power of youth facing power and publicly exposing it as a lie. The difficulty Isabella has in the loss of her identity as a novice and especially her faith at the end (represented in the cross she drops), brings a deeply vulnerable final moment to the play that I was very happy with. Meanwhile, Christopher effectively played Angelo as the modern ‘common sense’ social conservative in his sermon off the top and throughout the play. He was able to confide in the audience, sharing his descent into lechery, hypocrisy, and doubt, which made him a much more interesting character than solely a villain.

In the end I was pleased with the casting of all of the actors, who were dedicated to making this production work in spite of the challenges that come with problem plays and outdoor theatre. It was a diverse cast in age, cultural background, and gender, all of whom were committed to working as a cohesive group. It was a pleasure to rehearse this play even when I wasn’t sure of how to solve certain predicaments. To be able to spend weeks with actors and designers, explore demanding storytelling and make even more discoveries about this complex and unpredictable piece was a truly exciting experience that I’m grateful for. Finally, I’m extremely happy that we created a show that the audience in the park was able to embrace—actively applauding and commenting in the final act as part of the public trial for Isabella, Angelo, the Duke, and society at large.

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