

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged... (Revised)... [again]

by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield

Director's Note: The *Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged... Revised... Again* has been a popular comedy on both the London and New York stage, as well as a popular touring performance. The original was performed by just three actors, but in addition to adapting it for a high school-appropriate performance, we've also expanded the cast to twelve – SIX Females and SIX Males. It comprises all 37 of Shakespeare's plays into a single 90-minute slap-stick performance in line with the humor of *Monty Python* and *Saturday Night Live*.

This play is dependent upon ensemble work, so for this audition, please familiarize yourself with the following pages of script. Auditions will involve running through in various groups so I can get a good feel for who works the best with each other.

* * *

JESS: My friends, look at this sad individual. Abandoned by our educational system, hopped up on empty gigabytes of pirated text. And now look at the person sitting next to you. Go ahead! Look at them! Do you recognize the same vapid expression? The same pores, clogged with the acne of intellectual immaturity? Or do you perhaps see — keep looking! — do you see there a longing, a desperate plea for literary salvation?

ADAM: Can I sit down?

JESS: No! [*Getting really worked up.*] You stand there before us as a living symbol of a society whose capacity to comprehend, much less attain, the genius of a William Shakespeare has been systematically stunted by the recent films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, ravaged by the Tik Tok, and bankrupted by the babbling blather and pointless musicality of *Joker: Folie à Deux*.

[*JESS is now ignoring ADAM, who resumes his seat. JESS is now in full-on fire-and-brimstone mode.*]

My people, I say to you, toss out your tawdry television to savor the splendors of the sonnet! Exchange the isolation of the iPhone for the idylls of the iamb! Imagine a world where manly men wear pink tights with pride!

DANIELLE: Hallelujah!

JESS: A brave new world, where this book [*raising The Complete Works to the heavens*] is found in every hotel room in the world!

DANIELLE: Amen!

JESS: This is my dream, friends, and it begins here, tonight. Join us in taking the first steps down the path to literary salvation... by texting SHAKESPEARE REIGNS to 37154. Standard rates apply. Now on with the show, and may the Bard be with you!

[*The house lights fade as DANIELLE shakes JESS's hand.*]

[*JESS returns the book to DANIELLE and exits.*]

DANIELLE: [*Putting the book back on the bookstand.*] Those of you who own a copy of this book know that no collection is complete without a brief biography of the life of William Shakespeare. Providing this portion of the show will be two members of our company. Please welcome to the stage Adam Akland and Lilith LuPone!

[*ADAM and LILLY come to the stage, carrying smartphones. As they shake hands with DANIELLE, ADAM drops his phone, scrambles to pick it up, and starts swiping madly to find his place on the phone. DANIELLE retires to the overstuffed chair.*]

ADAM: [*Greets the audience with a bright & mischievous grin.*] Hey, y'all. As you can see, we're not audience members.

LILLY: Surprise!

ADAM: We totally punked you!

[*Indicating the phone*] Okay, um . . .

[*The two start swiping on the phone back and forth, almost like an argument*]

LILLY: We Googled Shakespeare's life so we could tell you all the stuff he did... [*Finds place on phone*] Okay . . . sorry, new phone.

ADAM: [*Holds up phone for audience to see*] The new iPhone 16 Pro from AT&T, a truly tremendous device—

[*DANIELLE clears her throat aggressively.*]

ADAM: Okay...[*Reading from phone*] William Shakespeare. William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, War-wick-shy-ur.

LILLY: [*Swipes*] The third of eight children, he was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a locally prominent merchant, and Mary Arden, daughter of a Roman.

ADAM: [*Swipes*] Catholic member of the landed gentry. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway.

[*ADAM and LILLY look at each other, confused, then look to DANIELLE.*]

DANIELLE: [*Mundane reassurance*] Not the Catwoman one. Different Anne Hathaway.

ADAM: Oh... That's a shame... [*Reads*] Shakespeare arrived in London in 1588.

LILLY: [*Swipes but doesn't find her place; swipes again*] There, with his provincial charm and folksy wit, he quickly became a popular figure around the U.S. Capitol.

ADAM: [*Swipes. Stops. Swiped back to double-check. Swipes forward again*] After dominating Michael Douglas in a debate, winning the highest office in the land, and totally nailing his role in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*...

LILLY: [*Swipes, hesitates*]Shakespeare issued the *Emancipation Proclamation* on New Year's Day 1863, thus freeing the slaves.

ADAM: I never knew that before!

[*DANIELLE glares and gestures to him to wrap it up. ADAM reads rapidly.*]

ADAM (cont.): Although Shakespeare modernized the economy, won the Civil War, and built a transcontinental railroad, he was sadly assassinated at the Globe Theater in 1864 by an actor with a cannon.

LILLY: [*Swipes*] He lies buried in a log cabin in Stratford.

ADAM: [*Swipes*] Annnnd... there's a huge monument to him at the mall!

BOTH: [*To audience*] Thank you.

[*ADAM and LILLY bow. DANIELLE shakes her hand and hurries him offstage.*]

DANIELLE: Okaaaay, well! The clock is ticking, Adult Puppet Guy is glaring at me from the wings, and so without further, further ado, we are proud to present *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) (Revised) (Again)!*