



Preview

*The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged*

2017

The Round Barn Theatre

Amish Acres

Nappanee, Indiana

By Frank Ramirez

## Preview of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged.

Nappanee, Ind. – February 20, 2017-- If you ever sat in school, wondering why your teacher assigned something so boring and incomprehensible as a play by Shakespeare, then “The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged” is for you.

On the other hand, if you ever sat in school entranced because the best teacher in the world assigned a play by Shakespeare, then “The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged” is for you.

And if you’ve ever wondered who is this Shakespeare guy then “The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged” is for you, too.

Thirty years ago Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Wingfield wrote and performed this play in Edinburgh, which led to a nine-year run in London and performances around the world. The play is manic -- the actors, who play themselves, parody one Shakespearean play after another. All the history plays, for instance, are squeezed into an American football game, or an English soccer match, or even Aussie Rules Football, depending on the actors’ country of origin. “Titus Andronicus,” one of Shakespeare’s goriest plays, becomes a cooking show that is not for the faint at heart.

And after a frenetic version of “Hamlet,” the cast attempts to perform it faster and faster,

and then does one more time backwards. In all, you'll see all thirty-seven plays in an hour and a half. Culture on the half shell. It's fast, it's painless, and it's worth it!

Now it's coming to the Round Barn Theatre as part of its Second Stage program in the Locke Township Meeting House.

"My favorite thing about it," Amber Burgess, Artistic Director of the Round Barn Theatre, noted, "is that when you think of Shakespeare you think of something flowery. It takes the idea of being afraid of Shakespeare and turns it on its ear. It's accessible. It's funny. It's smart."

If you've seen the show before, you haven't seen this show before, because each cast makes it their own, altering the script to suit their venue and locale, as well as their personalities. Burgess, who saw the show for the first time in 2005, near Denali National Park in Alaska, agreed. "There were a lot of references to the National Park Service instead of the normal references to the local mayor of the nearest town," she said. "Even though there's a format, there's an element of improvisation to it."

Those local references for these local performances will be developed by director Rory Dunn and his cast. Dunn is excited about directing this show. "You have a great script," he said. "The authors have written a lot of wonderful comedy. And this is the revised version. They've just updated some of the jokes and references, making it a little more contemporary, referencing television shows, recent technology, things like that."

But the key thing, he said, is "Practice, practice, practice. This is a fun, playful show. Once you start working with the cast you have the chance to develop that feeling of fun before the first audience comes in. You discover a lot in the process. The authors talk about how important it is that from the audience's perspective, this is the first time this show has been performed," Dunn added. "That's possible because the actors have worked so hard that it's finely tuned."

As for the show itself, Dunn said, "Really it's a love letter to Shakespeare in so many ways, even when they make fun of him. The authors want us to know about everything he's contributed to art, society, culture, and to have fun doing that."

Dunn himself remembers that "The first time he saw it, I was just blown away." His first performance was in a bar. "They just ambled down, set up a little stage, hung up a sheet behind which to make their costume changes, and got started. There was a wonderful pace. Everyone was great in what they were doing. And there was so much great audience interaction. "

The second time he saw it was on a college campus. “Those students had just been studying Shakespeare.” Dunn laughed. “For every cast and every audience it’s a different experience.”

Burgess emphasized that everyone in the audience would get something out of it.

“We already know the stories because they’re a part of our society. Whether people know it or not, they know a lot of Shakespeare. On the other hand, if you are a Shakespeare Scholar, there are plenty of private jokes in there for you.”

“The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged,” by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Wingfield, is part of The Round Barn’s Second Stage program and will be performed at the Locke Township Meeting Hall at Amish Acres, from March 17 through April 9, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 PM, Sundays at 2:00 PM. For ticket information call the Round Barn Theatre at 800-800-4942 or go to [www.amishacres.com](http://www.amishacres.com).