



Genesius Guild

**2002 Season
Study Guide**

Illinois Humanities Council



Genesisius Guild 2002 Summer Season

For 46 years, the Genesisius Guild had presented free, outdoor productions of classic works in Lincoln Park, Rock Island, Illinois, using an outdoor stage constructed by members of the amateur theatre group. Over time, the program has grown to include Shakespearean drama, Greek tragedy in mask, modern interpretations of Greek comedy, opera in English, and professional ballet.

This program is designed to give citizens of the Quad City region easy access to the great works of Western Civilization; to provide to all who are interested an opportunity to perform in great works of art; to foster an appreciation of and dedication to the best in performance art.

The guild is supported by the Genesisius Theatre Foundation, a tax-exempt organization charged with promoting the classics; the Rock Island Park Board, continuing an 80-year commitment to supporting local dramatic performance; the sponsorships of local organizations; grants from Iowa and Illinois Arts Councils; and the contributions of its audience.

The group is open to all who wish to participate. Tryouts for the four plays presented every year are held on the first two Sundays in June, with additional tryouts set for two days in between. No parts are pre-cast. Everyone auditioning has an equal opportunity to secure roles on and off stage.

During the summer season, the guild may be contacted at two telephone numbers: **788-7113** (the Lincoln Park stage) or **786-5420** (the guild costume house, 1120 40th Street, Rock Island). Additional information may be obtained by visiting the guild's website at **www.genesius.org**.

Summer Schedule 2002

Tryouts

June 2 and 9 (1 pm)

June 3 and 4 (7 pm)

June 8, 9	Puccini: "Gianni Schicchi" (rain date: June 10) (Opera At Augustana)
June 15, 16	"Ballet Under the Stars" - Program One
June 22, 23	"Ballet Under the Stars" - Program Two (Ballet Quad Cities)
June 29, 30 July 6, 7	The Religious Theatre of Henri Gheon: "The Parade At the Devil's Bridge" "The Miracle of St. Nicholas and the School Clerks" "The Sausage-Maker's Interlude"
July 13, 14, July 20, 21	Aeschylus: "Prometheus Bound"
July 27, 28 August 3, 4	Shakespeare: "Macbeth"
August 10, 11, August 17, 18	Aristophanes: "The Wasps"

**All performances at 8 pm
Lincoln Park Theatre
Rock Island, Illinois**

About the 2002 Schedule

While plays are not normally chosen with an overall subject in mind, one can occasionally detect a thematic thread running through them. For example, in 1985, every work staged had a direct relationship to events in the epic poems of Homer. This was even extended to a radio adaption of "The Odyssey," sponsored by the guild on WVIK.

One may detect in this year's plays themes of conscience, temptation, and justice.

The opera, *Gianni Schicchi*, is a comedy involving a group of greedy relatives tempted to rewrite the will of a deceased relative and how their crime is turned against them.

The Gheon plays bring a devil onstage to tempt a hermit (who has a weakness for bargaining) and a sausage-maker to expand his simple business beyond need or reason. These play are humorous rewritings of medieval miracle plays and, to illustrate how Gheon altered his material, the brief work which inspired one of his plays is presented in original form.

Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* tells part of the creation story from the point of view of ancient Athens and sets a righteous Titan against a merciless deity.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a classic story of unrestrained ambition which smothers conscience; of half-truths which tempt a greedy monarch to murder.

Finally, Aristophanes' *The Wasps* pokes fun at the legal system and a society which is addicted to law suits and trials, and an old man who cannot resist the temptation to serve on juries.

Giacomo Puccini



Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini was born in 1858 in the Italian town of Lucca. He was musically gifted and, by the age of nineteen, was organist and choirmaster at a local church. Because of his family's poverty, he was unable to obtain regular musical training until the age of 22, when he received a grant from the Queen. He then attended the Milan Conservatory of Music.

While still a student, he entered an opera competition, submitting his first work, *Le Villi*. He failed to win first prize, but the early opera impressed the famous music publisher, Ricordi, who commissioned a second work from the young man, *Edgar* (1889). It, too, was a failure.

With *Manon Lescaut* (1893), Puccini scored his first success, following it with his greatest works, *La Boheme* (1896), *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly* (both in 1890). His last opera, *Turandot*, was left unfinished at his death in 1924, and was completed by his friend, Franco Alfano.

His one comic opera, *Gianni Schicchi*, was conceived as the finale to a cycle of three one-act works, entitled *Il Trittico*. The other two are the sentimental *Suor Angelica* and the melodramatic *Il Tabarro*. *Gianni Schicchi* was given its premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in December, 1918.

Together with Giuseppe Verdi, Puccini represented the full flowering of Italian opera, begun by Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti. He was the last great exponent of the art, which was continued in later years by the American composer, Gian-Carlo Menotti.

Gianni Schicchi

by

Giacomo Puccini

The wealthy patriarch Buoso Donati has died and his family gathers, expressing their grief at the loss, but each secretly hoping to benefit from his will. As they are making their protestations of love for their dearly departed, one of them says he has heard a rumor that the will has been changed, leaving all of Donati's wealth and holdings to the monks at Santa Reparata in Signa.

Alarmed by this possibility, they begin to rummage through the house, looking for the will. After a frantic search, it is discovered by young Rinuccio, who won't hand it over until his aunt, La Zita, agrees that, since he will now have money, he can marry Lauretta, the daughter of a village peasant, Gianni Schicchi. She agrees and they read Donati's testament. The rumor is found to be a fact and the relatives vent their fury.

Young Rinuccio suggests that they seek help from the wily Gianni Schicchi. They angrily refuse, but it is too late; Rinuccio had already sent for him at La Zita's promise. Schicchi arrives with his daughter and quickly sizes up the situation. But La Zita tells him to leave; that her nephew will never marry a peasant.

Schicchi dismisses them as rabble and starts to go. His daughter pleads with him to salvage the situation for her sake in the opera's best-known aria, "O mio babbino caro." It is intended as a parody of grand opera convention, but it is a beautiful melody, the only part of the opera with which most people are acquainted.

Schicchi relents and devises a plan: he will impersonate Donati. The skeptical relatives are convinced his idea will work when the doctor comes to call and Schicchi reassures him in an imitation of Donati's quavering voice that old Buoso is still alive.

Schicchi then dresses in Donati's nightcap and gown and the village notary is sent for so that he can dictate a new will. Before the man arrives, Schicchi warns the relatives of the law: if anyone is caught falsifying a will, his hand will be cut off and he will be banished from Firenze (Florence). He tells them this, using the melancholy refrain, "Addio Firenze," which the relatives repeat.

When the notary arrives, Schicchi disposes of Donati's possessions, distributing old Buoso's wealth to all present, but he reserves the three most prized - the mule, the house, and the mill at Signa - till the end. These he

finally bequeaths to his “good friend, Gianni Schicchi.” As the relatives start to erupt in anger, he keeps them subdued by waving an empty sleeve and repeating “Addio Firenze” after each bequest and subsequent outcry.

When the notary leaves with the new will, the relatives go on a rampage, but Schicchi orders them out of the house. After all, it is now his. Lauretta and Rinuccio rejoice that the outcome leaves them free to marry, for she is now the daughter of a prosperous land-owner.

This production is presented by students and faculty of “Opera At Augustana.”

Ballet

QUAD
CITIES

Since 1997, Ballet Quad Cities, the region's professional ballet company, has presented two weekends of free performances as part of the Genesis Guild's summer series. That tradition continues this year, with two separate programs:

Program No. 1 (Untitled)

Choreographer Johanne Jakhelln has this production in development as this study guide goes to press. There will be a diversity of familiar and new offerings, including a new work devoted to the Tango.



Program No. 2 "A Family Weekend"

This program opens with local youngsters from Ballet Quad Cities' educational outreach program, "Dreams Achieved Through Dance."

The formal program is made up of major dances set to music by Heitor Villa-Lobos, Duke Ellington, and Serge Prokofiev. The concluding work is Prokofiev's popular *Peter and the Wolf*.

Henri Gheon



Henri Leon Vangeon was born on March 15, 1875, in Bray-sur-Sienne, France and died in Paris on July 23, 1944. Although he exhibited an early precocity for drama (writing his first play at the age of eight), he attended medical school and received a graduate degree. But he was still drawn to literature and, at the urging of Jacques Copeau, began writing poetry under the pen name Henri Gheon. In 1911, he published *Our Directions*, a set of essays in which he argued for a poetic drama which would not be bound to the naturalistic theatre of the day. He stated his arguments in a play entitled *Bread*.

The horrors and brutality of the First World War, in which he saw service, caused him to turn to religion. He then set out to revive the religious theatre of Medieval times. He wrote almost 100 plays on religious themes, most of which are aimed at the masses - especially young people - rather than a commercial audience. While his strong religious bias limits the appeal of his plays, he enjoyed a considerable measure of success by mixing theology with comedy.

In 1925, Gheon formed a troupe of young actors, *The Companions of Notre Dame*, to produce his plays in market places, schools, churches, and public venues. He was joined by others, notably Henri Brochet, who also wrote plays in Gheon's style. Most of these plays were one-act in length and dealt with events in the lives of the saints. Many of them were contemporary versions of medieval miracle and mystery plays.

Some of his works were also commercially produced and attracted a small but devoted following. In addition to his religious dramas, he also made several French adaptations of Shakespearean works, and a cycle of secular plays for outdoor production. His promotion of dramatic presentations outside the formal setting of a theatre had a strong influence on the still-developing trend for open-air productions, such as the annual presentations of the Genesius Guild.

Few of his plays have been published; among them, *The Marriage of St.*

Francis, The Marvelous History of St. Bernard, and The Comedian, the life of St. Genesius. This play was produced by the Genesius Guild in 1982 for its 25th anniversary season.

The Sausage-Maker's Interlude and The Parade At the Devil's Bridge are taken from a collection of short plays by Gheon and Brochet: *St Anne and the Gouty Rector, and Other Plays*.

The Genesius Guild takes its name from the central character in one of Gheon's major works. Genesius was an "invented" saint. He was said to be a Roman actor who burlesqued the rite of Baptism on stage, but was converted to Christianity by the act. This was said to have occurred in a performance before the Roman Emperor, Diocletian, who condemned him to death by stoning. Gheon tells the story with his own particular slant in his three-act play, *The Comedian*.

In the Christian tradition, Genesius is the patron of comedians and actors. While not in any sense a religious organization, the Genesius Guild took its name from this mythic figure, largely because he figured in one of Gheon's best-known works, because the group took its acting style from Gheon's tradition of open-air performance, and because it seems appropriate for actors to have a patron saint who was purely imaginary.

The Parade At the Devil's Bridge

by
Henri Gheon

This short play seems to have developed from an old tradition or from Gheon's imagination. The closest reference to be found in Butler's exhaustive "Lives Of the Saints" is a French saint, one Clodoald or Cloud, who was of royal birth, but who lived as a hermit on the River Seine.

In the play, the hermit is Father Kado who lives with his cat on a island just off the coast of Brittany, near the mouth of a river. The Stage Manager introduces the hermit and his cat at the start of the play and establishes the non-realistic style of the performance.

A peddler enters and sits on the bank of the river. A peasant enters and tells the stranger of the hermit who tries to build a bridge to the mainland every day, only to have the tide wash it away every night. The peddler intimates that Father Kado has had some dealings with the devil, which is why he can't build a bridge. The peasant is shocked and leaves, inviting the peddler to dinner that evening with his family.

After the peasant leaves, the peddler is revealed as the devil. He tells Kado that he is the one who tears his bridge down every night and that he will continue to do so. Kado says he will continue as well. Stalemate.

Then the devil tries compromise with Kado, exploiting the hermit's great weakness for bargaining. The devil says he will leave the bridge alone if Kado will let him have the first to cross it. In a moment of weakness, Kado agrees. The devil leaves to lure the peasant and his daughter to be the first ones to use the bridge in the morning.

Kado realizes his mistake, but it is too late to cancel the bargain. The devil returns with his victims, but is frustrated in his attempt to capture a soul by the hermit's surprising cat.

The Miracle of St. Nicholas and the Three School Clerks

(Anonymous - 13th Century)

St. Nicholas was a bishop of Myra in Asia Minor. He became one of the most popular subjects for early miracle plays, some of which date back to the 11th Century. Most of the legends which have grown up around Nicholas concern threes: three sailors being saved from drowning; three young men freed from unjust imprisonment; three young girls saved from prostitution, and three children brought back to life after being killed and pickled in brine. It is the latter incident which is dramatised in this very brief work.

Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia and Greece and, among many other nations and crafts, the patron of pawnbrokers. The latter derives from the three bags of gold he threw into a father's window to provide dowries for his three daughters, which correspond to the three golden spheres which are the universal sign for pawnbrokers.

In this play, three young men have come to the city (probably Paris, site of a great Medieval university) to study. Having arrived at night, they seek lodging. An old man and his wife refuse them at first but, when the young men offer to pay, agree to provide them a room for the night.

The old man and his wife discuss the bags of money they have seen in the young men's possession and determine to kill them for their wealth.

In the morning, St. Nicholas comes in for breakfast, asking for meat. The old man protests they have none, but the bishop says there is freshly-killed meat in the house and the old man knows it. The man and his wife beg for forgiveness and the bishop restores the three young men to life.

A *Te Deum* ("Praise God") is sung, ending the play.

The Sausage-Maker's Interlude

by
Henri Gheon

This play follows the plot of the miracle play, but expands and transforms it, making it into a commentary on a materialistic society.

The Stage Manager and Devil return from *The Parade At the Devil's Bridge*. The former addresses the audience; the latter, sets out to exploit the Sausage-Maker's weakness, even as he worked on Father Kado.

The Sausage-Maker (Creon) and his wife are at a French county fair, offering their pork products for sale. The Sausage-Maker has a new machine which enables him to produce sausage at a much faster pace. He is impatient to expand his business, but his wife is happy with things as they are.

Creon tells his wife that, since this is the busiest fair in history, they may run out of sausage and, if they do, he will throw her into the machine to produce extra sausage. He demands that she take an inventory.

As she runs through the list, the devil writes it down. Then, he asks the Stage Manager to fill the order for him. When the Stage Manager buys all the pork products, the Sausage-Maker starts after his wife with a cleaver.

At this point, three children enter. They are supposed to be working in the fields, but have run away to enjoy the fair. Creon lures them into the machine, where they are ground into sausage.

Then, the bishop (Nicholas) enters, requesting a sausage sandwich. He asks the Sausage-Maker about his machine, wondering if it will go into reverse. He runs the machine backwards, restoring the children to life.

Nicholas then warns Creon not to be so greedy; further, to break his machine by throwing the devil into it. And so ends the play.

Aeschylus



He is considered the father of tragedy and, hence, the founder of dramatic art. He was born around the year 525 B.C. in the town of Eleusis, an important center of Greek worship, the site of the Eleusinian Mysteries. There were other, earlier writers with whom he competed, but his name and his plays stand at the beginning of what we know about theatrical history, along with Thespis, the first actor.

Aeschylus was born into a noble family, the son of Euphorion. He fought at Marathon and probably was involved in subsequent battles at Salamis and Plataea. It was the success of these military operations that gave Athens its ultimate victory over the Empire of Persia and led to the establishment of its own empire and the triumph of Athenian democracy.

His contribution to Greek tragedy was enormous. He started the transition from religious, lyric presentation to human, histrionic drama by introducing a second soloist (actor) to the choric dithyramb making possible the exchanges of dialogue which are basic to plot development and character, a process pushed much further along by Sophocles, who introduced a third actor in his dramas. It is said that he was also very much interested in what we might call stage effects.

Aeschylus died Gela in Sicily. He had gone to the court of Hiero, Tyrant of Syracuse to compose a (lost) tragedy to celebrate the founding of the city of Etna. There are stories about his being forced to leave Athens or his death being the result of an eagle dropping a tortoise on his bald head, mistaking it for a rock. But these are legends, not fact.

His epitaph is said to have been composed by the poet himself:

“Here, in the fertile soil of Gela, lies Aeschylus, son of Euphorion.
Of his notable courage the field of Marathon could speak,
and the long-haired Mede; for he knows it well.”

Aeschylus wrote at least 90 tragedies, of which seven survive, along

with fragments of and references to about 72 others. The only complete trilogy which survives from classic times is his *Oresteia*, one of the most important works in Western Civilization. (Tragedians customarily wrote and presented three plays to be presented together.)

Dramatic poets competed for prizes at two annual events in Athens, both dedicated to Dionysus. Three poets were chosen to present their works and they were judged by the city's most eminent citizens. Everyone came to the theatre to see these works which were, at the time, new and fascinating spectacles and the subject of intense, general interest.

Aeschylus won first prize thirteen times, his first victory coming in 485 B.C.

His surviving plays:

The Oresteia (458 B.C.)

- consisting of three tragedies:

Agamemnon

Chorephores (The Libation Bearers)

Eumenides (The Furies)

Seven Against Thebes (469 B.C.)

The Persians (472 B.C.)

The Suppliants (490 B.C. ?)

Prometheus Bound (?)

Modern scholarship is inclined to strike *Prometheus Bound* from the list of Aeschylus' authentic works. It is strikingly different from anything we know of his, even though his "temper" seems well-reflected in the play. Most scholars would now date *Prometheus Bound* at least a century after Aeschylus' death.

Prometheus Bound

This is the first play of a trilogy dealing with the fate of a Titan, Prometheus, who is punished by the gods for giving fire (and, hence, civilization) to humans. The second and third plays deal with Prometheus' further punishments and his ultimate reconciliation with Zeus, the king of the gods, whom Prometheus so stubbornly defies in the first play.

The scene is a rocky wilderness in Scythia, the "end of the earth" according to the Greeks. Prometheus has been brought here by Force and Violence, led by Hephaistos. They have been ordered by Zeus to chain Prometheus to a cliff, with a spike through his chest, as punishment for giving fire to humankind. Hephaistos is reluctant to so humiliate a fellow god, but Force has no qualms. Violence, significantly, says nothing throughout the scene, but happily does the dirty work. They leave Prometheus alone.

As Prometheus laments his fate, a chorus of sea birds fly in to console and to mourn for him. He explains to them that he has helped humans out of pity for their helplessness. He also hints that he knows how Zeus can be overthrown.

Ocean, the spirit of the sea, comes riding in on a sea monster, offering to make a personal plea before Zeus in Prometheus' behalf. When he is warned just how dangerous this might be, he thinks better of it and leaves.

Next, Io, a half-woman, half-cow, blunders into the scene, still being tormented by Hera, wife of Zeus, who is jealous of her husband's interest in the girl. She is another victim of the gods' indifferent cruelty to humans. To her, Prometheus reveals that Zeus will be defeated by another amorous relationship, but he will not give details. He also reveals to Io what her future will be and how, many years later, one of her offspring, the hero Herakles, will release him from his suffering. Io then flees, stung by Hera's gadfly.

The chorus of sea birds speaks solemnly of the danger inherent in traffic with the gods, vowing to live their lives according to the situation Fate has allotted them.

At this point, Hermes, messenger of the gods, arrives to demand from Prometheus just what this secret is about Zeus. (Prometheus' name means "forethought" - he has a brother, Epimetheus, "afterthought" - and his great gift is that he knows what will happen in the future.) Prometheus refuses to tell what he foresees. Hermes then threatens him with further punishment. He will be crushed under an avalanche. Then, many centuries later, after he

struggles to the surface, he will be imprisoned again and an eagle will arrive every day to eat away his liver, which will grow back again at night. (A Titan is immortal; he cannot die. This means that Prometheus' suffering can go on as long as the earth lasts. When it perishes, all creation, including the gods, will disappear.)

Prometheus still refuses and Hermes leaves, warning the chorus members to save themselves. They say they will stay with Prometheus. Then thunder rolls; it is Zeus, who calls the mountain down upon the Titan, who shouts his defiance to the end.

NOTE:

The incidental music for this performance has been commissioned by the Genesis Guild from Bruce Professor Polay of Knox College. It is performed by members of the Augustana Symphony Orchestra. This production is the occasion for the first public performances of the score.

Prometheus Bound

(Some Further Thoughts)

This play comes from the beginning of theatrical performance, the Golden Age of Greece - or, more precisely, Athens.

Greek tragedy grew out of religious observance. Twice a year, religious festivals were held in honor of Dionysus. These featured choral contests in which groups of singers presented music in honor of the god and the leading citizens of the city selected one performance as the best.

During one of these presentations, a choral leader sang a solo, but did it, not in his own person, but as if he were the god. He may even have worn a mask to heighten the effect. This innovation electrified the audience and quickly led to the addition of a second soloist, making possible the kind of exchanges which constitute theatre.

This innovator was named **Thespis** and actors have been called Thespians to this day in his honor.

Hundreds of these plays were presented but only a handful survive; they are the work of the three great dramatists of the age: Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

These poetic works are called tragedies. The term comes from two Greek words meaning "goat" and "song." We have no idea just what this term meant or why it was used.

The great power of these tragedies has fired the imagination of actors, audiences, philosophers, and scholars for over two thousand years. Many commentators have tried to devise a simple definition of tragedy which would cover all such writings, but none has proved to be wholly satisfactory. This guide includes some for your consideration.

What is Tragedy?

Some ideas:

Pain changed into, or charged with, exaltation.

The suffering of a soul that can suffer greatly.
(A struggle past the power of the human heart to bear.)

Knowledge of something irremediably wrong with the world come to a poet with his poet's power to see beauty in the truth of human life.

An exploratory form, not an illustrative one..

Tragedy proposes that the door is open and that a person may walk through.

Pain depresses; tragedy uplifts.

There is a difference, not of degree but of kind, between tragic pain and all other pain.

Pity and awe and a sense of emotion purged and purified thereby
(Aristotle)

Reconciliation; life's temporary dissonance resolved into eternal harmony.
(Hegel)

Acceptance. The mind that says "Thy will be done."
(Sophocles)

The affirmation of the will to live in the face of death - and the joy of its inexhaustibility when so reaffirmed.
(Nietzsche)

That singular swing toward exaltation
(Schopenhauer)

It is the tragic heroes' fame to have done what they have done.
(Hegel)

An investigation of the possibilities of human freedom.
(Kerr)

All that is serious in life comes from our freedom
(Bergson)

In tragedy, Greek genius penetrated farthest and it is a revelation of what was most profound in them.

Some Quotes

“Tragedy is restful; and the reason is that hope, that foul, deceitful thing, has no part in it.”

(Anoulih)

“Only a great mind overthrown yields tragedy.”

(Barzun)

“A tragic writer does not have to believe in God, but he must believe in man.”

(Krutch)

“A tragic situation exists precisely when virtue does *not* triumph, but when it is felt that man is nobler than the forces which destroy him.”

(Orwell)

“The essence of dramatic tragedy is not unhappiness. It resides in the solemnity of the remorseless working of things.”

(Whitehead)

“In tragedy great men are more truly great than in history.

(Napoleon)

Why is it that man desires to be made sad, beholding doleful and tragical things, which yet himself would by no means suffer?”

(Augustine)

“When man behaves correctly as man, and then is tripped up by forces he cannot control or understand, we have tragedy.”

(Hadas)

“The tragic vision calls up out of the depths the first (and last) of all questions, the question of existence: what does it mean to be? It is not for those who cannot live with unsolved questions or unresolved doubts . . . nor is it for those . . . who would do nothing. The tragic vision impels the man of action to fight against his destiny . . . and state his case before God.

(Sewall)

“Pity, awe, reconciliation, exaltation - these are the elements that make up tragic pleasure. No play is a tragedy which does not call them forth.

Why is the death of an ordinary man a wretched, chilling thing from which we turn, while the death of a hero, always tragic, warms us with a sense of quickened life? Answer this question and the enigma of tragic pleasure is solved.”

(Hamilton)

William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare was born in Stratford, England shortly before April 26, 1564. He died in the same village on April 23, 1616. His christening occurred on April 26, and historians prefer to place his birth on the 23rd, to align his birth with his death, but he probably was born a few days earlier.

It also helps that April 23rd is the Feast day of St. George, England's patron saint.

Shakespeare came from a Catholic family at a time when it was becoming dangerous to be a papist. His father was a prominent citizen, rising to the position of mayor. His subsequent fall from eminence may well have been a consequence of the religious tensions of the time. At any rate, Shakespeare made it his life's ambition to restore the family to its former position, something he achieved through the fame and fortune he secured by his work as a playwright and actor.

Shakespeare was educated at the Stratford school and his plays reflect the topics he studied there. The country life of Stratford is also present in his works, even when they are set in exotic places. This is especially true of the three plots which were drawn from his own imagination. The majority of his works were based on earlier versions by other authors.

It is likely that he served as a household instructor/entertainer during early manhood, but we have no concrete evidence of this. It is also likely that he joined a troupe of travelling actors when they visited Stratford, short one performer.

However it happened, we find him in London, leaving wife and children behind in Stratford, but not abandoning them. He made regular visits home and lavished his income on their welfare.

He first came to prominence as a poet, but was soon the best-known playwright in London, attracting the envy of some, but the general admiration of most. He collaborated with other playwrights, but often wrote alone. Certainly, his great plays are the product of a single sensibility.

He began with comedies and histories, but gradually moved into the nobler realm of tragedy, producing the greatest poetic dramas in the English language. He retired from the stage and returned to live out his days with honor in Stratford. Before finally retiring, he collaborated with John Fletcher on several plays when the younger man was engaged to replace him as the King's Men's resident author.

Shakespeare's dramatic creations are of such an exceptional nature that some scholars have tried to assign their authorship to others, especially some lesser poets and noblemen who had university training. The reasoning being that only someone with a college degree would be capable of such dazzling work.

This is a pointless exercise, as Shakespeare had the same education as Ben Jonson, an acknowledged playwright, who, incidentally, was indebted to Shakespeare for getting his plays accepted for performance. There is also the fact that the plays demonstrate an intimate knowledge of both the theatre and the men who made up his acting company. It is fairly easy to portray the nobility and to cobble up information on foreign lands. What is not so easy is for a nobleman to understand country life to the ground, which was one of Shakespeare's great dramatic strengths.

Shakespeare was simply a unique genius, rather like Mozart, whose musical inspiration and creations are inexplicably beyond that of other composers, even as Shakespeare's works stand at the pinnacle of poetic drama.

Macbeth

by
William Shakespeare

If asked to name a Scottish king, most people likely would reply, "Macbeth." This is not because of the king's importance in world, or even Scottish, history, but because of Shakespeare's play.

The real Macbeth ruled Scotland for 17 years (1040 - 1057) and was a legitimate claimant to the throne. The unfortunate characteristic of royal succession in that land, at that time, encouraged assassination. The crown alternated from one of two royal lines to the other and many prospective kings were happy to help the man ahead of them to an early grave - as Macbeth did Duncan.

Nick Aitchison's book, "Macbeth: Man and Myth," relates what facts we know about Macbeth the man, the world he inhabited, and what actually happened to him. Shakespeare's play, while not historically true, deals with deeper issues and reveals a different kind of truth.

* * *

When the play begins, we see (or hear) three witches set the scene and situation: "Fair is foul and foul is fair" and plan to meet with Macbeth "when the battle's lost and won." Ambiguity will dominate the play.

Then we encounter the present king of Scotland, Duncan, at the end of a battle in which his enemies have been defeated. He learns of Macbeth's heroism in the fight and of the treachery of the Thane of Cawdor. He sends Ross and Angus to find Macbeth and greet him with Cawdor's title.

Macbeth and his friend, Banquo (an invented, non-historical character), meet the three witches who greet Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and future king. They tell Banquo that he will be lesser and greater than Macbeth, for he will father a line of kings, but will not occupy the throne. The witches vanish and the two men are puzzling over the prophecies when Ross and Angus enter, hailing Macbeth as Cawdor and urging him to meet with Duncan. Macbeth wonders if the witches speak the truth.

Next, Duncan lavishes praise on Macbeth. He also proclaims his son, Malcolm, heir to the throne (in contradiction of Scottish law and practice). He proposes to visit Macbeth's castle and Macbeth leaves to prepare a welcome.

When Lady Macbeth receives and reads a letter from her husband, we learn that the two of them have been talking about replacing Duncan and she thinks his visit will give them the perfect opportunity. Macbeth has qualms about killing the king, but Lady Macbeth brushes them aside.

Duncan and his party arrive at Dunsinane Castle and are greeted by the Macbeths. It is worth noting that this is the only scene in the play in which we may assume the sun to be shining.

As the feast which welcomes Duncan goes on, Macbeth enters the stage and has a long argument with himself about whether or not to continue with his plot to kill the king. He has decided not to when Lady Macbeth enters and upbraids him for his cowardice. Armed anew with her resolution, he leaves to carry out the plan: to kill Duncan and place daggers in the hands of the drunken grooms, sleeping in the chamber with him, and to smear Duncan's blood on their hands. He returns, after killing the king, but has forgotten to deal with the grooms. Lady Macbeth takes the daggers from him and goes in to finish the job. Her hands are now as boody as his, but she says a little water will clear them of "this filthy witness." Someone is heard banging at the gates and the two retire to their chamber.

A porter enters, drunk and half-asleep, on his way to answer the knocking, but loses himself for a while in a nonsensical interpretation of the noise. (This is the only spot of humor in the play.) He then admits MacDuff. Macbeth enters and welcomes him, showing him the way to Duncan's chamber. MacDuff goes off to awaken the king, only to return immediately to announce that Duncan has been murdered. Macbeth rushes into the room while MacDuff arouses the whole castle. As everyone assembles, Macbeth re-enters the room, mourning the king and apologizing for his impetuosity in killing the grooms, the supposed murderers. As everyone retires to their rooms to get dressed, Duncan's son, Malcolm and Donalbain, decide to slip away, lest they become victims, too.

After Macbeth is crowned king, he becomes concerned about the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo's children. He hires murderers to kill Banquo and his son, Fleance. The plot is only half-successful; Fleance escapes.

At a feast, Macbeth receives word of Banquo's death. But, as the party proceeds, he sees Banquo's ghost grinning at him. The party breaks up in "most admir'd disorder." Macbeth decides to consult the witches.

The witches give Macbeth a warning against MacDuff and what seem to be happy predictions; that he cannot be vanquished unless Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and that no man born of woman can kill him. While he is encouraged by this news, he decides to attack MacDuff's castle and slaughter his family.

We see a brief domestic scene with Lady MacDuff and her young son before they are set upon by Macbeth's assassins.

MacDuff, meanwhile, is in England, trying to motivate Malcolm to return to Scotland with an army to overthrow Macbeth. Malcolm is cautious, unsure of MacDuff's loyalty. As he is won over, Ross enters to tell MacDuff of the loss of his family. Malcolm rallies the two men to join him and the English army which is poised to invade Scotland to set Malcolm on the throne.

At the start of Act V, we discover, in company with a nurse and doctor, that Lady Macbeth, a tower of resolution at the play's beginning, is now unable to rest in peace, constantly walking in her sleep and trying to wash Duncan's blood from her hands.

In a series of rather short scenes, the English army sets out and Macbeth confidently prepares to oppose them.

As the English army approaches, Macbeth's confidence is shaken when he learns that Birnam Wood seems to be marching against his castle (Soldiers have cut down branches to carry, to conceal their number.) He is then told of Lady Macbeth's death. He sets out to fight, killing the son of the English general, Siward.

He quickly comes face-to-face with MacDuff, where he learns that MacDuff was not "born" but delivered by Caesarian section. "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb.

With his last hope gone, Macbeth is still resolved to fight: "Lay on, MacDuff, and damn'd be him that first cries 'Hold, enough!'"

The victorious Malcolm enters the castle after MacDuff slays Macbeth and proclaims his victory, naming all his noble followers earls.

Notes on Macbeth

It is the shortest of the tragedies, with only 2107 lines. Some scholars think that the play may have been written in haste, with parts of the last act quickly cobbled up or finished by a collaborator. From this and from references in the play to contemporary events, it would seem that the drama was first performed in 1606, probably at court.

It is thought that the play was written to flatter England's new monarch, James I of Scotland, who traced his title back to the imaginary Banquo (a person invented by the historian Hector Boece to provide the House of Stuart with a noble ancestor) and who authored a book on witchcraft.

The supernatural permeates the play. Events are almost dreamlike, with apparitions, visions, prophecies, and unnatural events. The colors of the play are red and black: blood and night. There is a restless current of action; one critic said that the play seemed to have no beginning or middle, but started at the end, with events rushing to a terrible conclusion.

One brief scene is often cited as an example of this "unreality." Macbeth assigns two murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance. Yet a third shows up and is the one who seems to know everything about the situation. He is also the first to realize that, with Fleance escaping, they have failed. It is almost as if Macbeth himself is somehow present in the third murderer.

While Macbeth becomes a heartless killer by play's end, he remains a rather sympathetic character, in large measure because we remember the agonizing struggle with his conscience at the beginning.

Later interpolations add Hecate to the cast and call for music and dance for the witches. This addition, which seriously undercuts the mood of the play, is thought to have been added to Shakespeare's text by another author.

Aristophanes



Little is known about the man considered by many scholars to be the theatre's finest author of comedies. He was born around 445 B.C. into a wealthy family, the son of Philippus. His family probably belonged to the class of Athenians known as "Knights," "the prosperous, generally conservative stratum of society between the rich aristocracy and the peasants and urban proletariat."

Something of his life may be gleaned from his plays. We know that he was bald, that his family had an interest in the island of Aegina, that he never staged his own plays, preferring to hand them over to a producer/director, and that he had a life-long dislike for an Athenian leader named Kleon, whom he attacked in many of his plays.

His outlook is generally conservative, in opposition to the new democratic structure of his city-state. In all of his extant plays, there are direct or indirect references to the tragedies of Euripides. He makes fun of them, but seems to be drawn to some of the ideas expressed in them. So much so that the comic poet Cratinus coined a word to express the phenomenon: "Euripidaristophanization."

Eleven of his fifty-plus comedies survive, all of them touching on events and ideas prevalent in Athens during his lifetime. Although he satirized Socrates in "The Clouds," he may very well have been involved with the intellectuals who were part of that philosophic circle. He figures in Plato's *Symposium*, in which he and Socrates outdrink all the other guests, ending the night-long party in conversation.

Aristophanes won more first prizes than any other comic poet. He died shortly after the production of *Plutus*, somewhere around 385 B.C. He was survived by three sons - Philippus, Araros, and Nikostratos - all of whom followed in his profession.

The Wasps

by
Aristophanes

This play is devoted to the poet's critique of the Athenian jury system. Cases were tried in front of city-wide juries, sometimes involving over a thousand men (women were not allowed to vote). In order to assure that citizens would show up for this duty, Pericles instituted a small payment for jury service. The demagogue Kleon increased it to three obols a day, which Socrates thought a corruption of what should be unpaid, civic responsibility.

The play involves the struggle between an old man Philokleon ("I love Kleon") and his son, Phobokleon ("I hate Kleon"). The son wants his father to give up his addiction to jury service and forcibly restrains him from leaving the house. A chorus of old men (the Wasps), who share Philokleon's love of jury duty (and easy pay), come to help him escape.

Phobokleon manages to calm everyone down and placates his father by arranging for a trial in their own home, in which the family dog is accused of stealing a cheese. The play breaks down, as do most of these comedies, into a series of related incidents, ending with the old man escaping, leading everyone in a wild dance, and scurrying off with a flute girl.

About the only thing to be retained in the Genesis Guild's version of the play is the conflict and the chorus. Since much of the point of the original comedy depends on intimate knowledge of ancient Athens, modern situations and personalities are freely introduced, in order to capture the spirit, rather than the letter of the play.

More details cannot be given because the play is not written until the beginning of August. This permits aspects of the guild's season and recent events to be worked into the play. No one sees a script until the first day of rehearsal.

GENESIUS GUILD SUMMER SEASONS

1957	Sophocles:	Antigone	1970	Sophocles:	Philoctetes
				Shakespeare:	As You Like It
1958	Sophocles:	Oedipus Rex		Shakespeare:	Measure for Measure
				Aristophanes:	Ecclesiazusae
1959	Euripides:	Iphigenia in Aulis			
1960	Euripides:	Alcestis	1971	Euripides:	Hecuba
	Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part One		Shakespeare:	The Taming of a Shrew
				Shakespeare:	King Lear
				Aristophanes:	Plutus
1961	Sophocles:	Antigone			
	Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part One	1972	Sophocles:	Antigone
	Shakespeare:	Macbeth		Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part One
	Aristophanes:	The Birds		Shakespeare:	Henry IV, Part Two
				Aristophanes:	The Knights
1962	Sophocles:	Ajax			
	Shakespeare:	Twelfth Night	1973	Euripides:	Medea
	Shakespeare:	Othello		Shakespeare:	Romeo and Juliet
	Aristophanes:	The Frogs		Aristophanes:	The Birds
				Barber:	<i>A Hand of Bridge</i>
1963	Euripides:	Medea		Menotti:	<i>The Old Maid and the Thief</i>
	Shakespeare:	A Midsummer Night's Dream			
	Shakespeare:	Richard II	1974	Aeschylus:	Seven Against Thebes
	Aristophanes:	The Clouds		Shakespeare:	Twelfth Night
				Shakespeare:	Antony and Cleopatra
1964	Euripides:	The Trojan Women		Floyd:	<i>Slow Dusk</i>
	Shakespeare:	Much Ado About Nothing		Dougherty:	<i>Many Moons</i>
	Shakespeare:	Coriolanus			
	Aristophanes:	The Acharnians	1975	Euripides:	The Trojan Women
	Shaw:	Don Juan in Hell		Shakespeare:	A Midsummer Night's Dream
	Shaw:	The Dark Lady of the Sonnets		Shakespeare:	"Sounds and Sweet Airs"
	Moeller:	Helena's Husband		Aristophanes:	The Frogs
1965	Sophocles:	Elektra			
	Shakespeare:	The Tempest	1976	Euripides:	The Bacchae
	Shakespeare:	Macbeth		Shakespeare:	The Tempest
				Shakespeare:	Much Ado About Nothing
1966	Sophocles:	Oedipus Rex		Aristophanes:	The Clouds
	Shakespeare:	Hamlet		Mascagni:	<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>
	Shakespeare:	"Sounds and Sweet Airs"			
	Aristophanes:	Thesmophoriazusae	1977	Sophocles:	Oedipus at Colonus
				Shakespeare:	Richard II
1967	Aeschylus:	Prometheus Bound		Aristophanes:	Thesmophoriazusae
	Shakespeare:	Julius Caesar		Copland:	<i>The Tender Land</i>
	Fry:	A Phoenix Too Frequent			
1968	Sophocles:	Ajax			
	Shakespeare:	The Merry Wives of Windsor	1978	Sophocles:	Elektra
	Shakespeare:	Richard III		Shakespeare:	Julius Caesar
	Aristophanes:	Peace		Aristophanes:	Ecclesiazusae
				Gilbert-Sullivan:	<i>The Mikado</i>
1969	Euripides:	The Bacchae			
	Shakespeare:	The Merchant of Venice	1979	Sophocles:	Oedipus Rex
	Shakespeare:	The Comedy of Errors		Shakespeare:	The Merry Wives of Windsor
	Aristophanes:	The Wasps		Shakespeare:	Richard III
				Aristophanes:	The Acharnians
				Gilbert-sullivan:	<i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i>

- 1980 Euripides: Alcestis
 Shakespeare: Measure for Measure
 Greissecker: Royal Gambit
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Pirates of Penzance*
- 1981 Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound
 Shakespeare: Hamlet
 Aristophanes: The Wasps
 Shaw: Don Juan in Hell
 Shaw: The Dark Lady of the Sonnets
 Fry: A Phoenix Too Frequent
 Gheon: The Comedian
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Yeoman of the Guard*
- 1982 Sophocles: Antigone
 Shakespeare: As You Like It
 Shakespeare: Coriolanus
 Aristophanes: Plutus
 Gilbert-Sullivan: *The Mikado*
- 1983 Euripides: Medea
 Shakespeare: The Taming of the Shrew
 Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet
 Aristophanes: The Birds
 Menotti: *The Telephone*
 various: *Arias*
- 1984 Euripides: Hippolytus
 Shakespeare: The Comedy of Errors
 Shakespeare: Othello
 Aristophanes: The Frogs
 Offenbach: *Ba-Ta-Clan*
- 1985 Sophocles: Ajax
 Euripides: Helen
 Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida
 Giroudoux: The Tiger at the Gates
 Moeller: Helena's Husband
 Offenbach: *La Belle Helene*
- 1986 Sophocles: The Women of Trachis
 Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream
 Shakespeare: Macbeth
 Aristophanes: Peace
 Offenbach: *Orpheus in the Underworld*
- 1987 Euripides: The Trojan Women
 Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale
 Aristophanes: The Knights
 Moliere: The Doctor in Spite of Himself
 Offenbach: *La Perichole*
 Shakespeare: King Lear (Deere)
- 1988 Euripides: The Bacchae
 Shakespeare: The Two Gentlemen of Verona
 Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice
 Aristophanes: The Clouds
 Mozart: *The Impresario*
 Menotti: *The Old Maid and the Thief*
 Shaw: Don Juan in Hell (R.I. Library)
 Shakespeare: "Sound & Sweet Airs"
 (R.I. Library)
- 1989 Sophocles: Oedipus at Colonus
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part One
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part Two
 Aristophanes: Thesmophoriazusae
 Mozart: *Così fan tutte*
- 1990 Aeschylus: The Oresteia
 Agamemnon
 The Choephoros
 The Eumenides
 Shakespeare: Henry V
 Aristophanes: Ecclesiazusae
 Mozart: *The Marriage of Figaro*
- 1991 Sophocles: Oedipus Rex
 Shakespeare: Twelfth Night
 Shakespeare: Much Ado About Nothing
 Aristophanes: The Acharnians
 Mozart: *The Magic Flute*
 Eliot: Murder in the Cathedral
 (various churches)
- 1992 Sophocles: Antigone
 Shakespeare: All's Well That Ends Well
 Shakespeare: King John
 Aristophanes: The Wasps
 Salieri: *A Little Harlequinade*
 Mozart: *The Goose of Cairo*
- 1993 Euripides: Hecuba
 Shakespeare: Merry Wives of Windsor
 Shakespeare: The Tempest
 Aristophanes: Plutus
 Mozart: *La Finta Giardiniera*
- 1994 Euripides: Medea
 Shakespeare: As You Like It
 Shakespeare: Measure for Measure
 Aristophanes: Peace
 Mozart: *Don Giovanni*

- 1995: Euripides: Andromache
 Shakespeare: A Comedy of Errors
 Shakespeare: Antony & Cleopatra
 Aristophanes The Knights
 Mozart: *Bastien and Bastienne*
 Barab: *Little Red Riding Hood*
 A Shakespeare Review
 (Regional Rotary Meeting)
- 1996 Aeschylus: The Persians
 Shakespeare: Love's Labour's Lost
 Shakespeare: King Lear
 Aristophanes: The Birds
 Mozart: *A Retrospective Concert*
- 1997 Euripides: Alcestis
 Shakespeare: Midsummer Night's Dream
 Shakespeare: Romeo & Juliet
 Aristophanes: The Frogs
Ballet Under the Stars
- 1998 Euripides: Elektra
 Shakespeare: The Taming of the Shrew
 Shakespeare: Julius Caesar
 Aristophanes: The Clouds
Ballet Under the Stars
- 1999 Sophocles: Ajax
 Shakespeare: Two Gentlemen of Verona
 Shakespeare: Richard II
 Aristophanes: Thesmophoriazusae
Ballet Under the Stars
- 2000 Aeschylus: The Suppliants
 Shakespeare: Twelfth Night
 Shakespeare: Richard III
 Aristophanes: Ecclesiazusae
Ballet Under the Stars
 "Shakespeare: A Working Professional"
 "Shakespeare: His Life In His Works"
- 2001 Euripides: The Trojan Women
 Shaw: Dark Lady Of the Sonnets
 Fry: A Phoenix Too Frequent
 Shakespeare: Hamlet
 Aristophanes: The Acharnians
Ballet Under the Stars
 "The Idea Of Tragedy"
- 2002 Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound
 Gheon: Parade At the Devil's Bridge
 The Sausage-Maker's Interlude
 Anon: Miracle of St. Nicholas
 3 School Clerks
 Shakespeare: Macbeth
 Aristophanes: The Wasps
 Puccini: *Gianni Schicchi*
Ballet Under the Stars
- 2003 Euripides: The Bacchae
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part One
 Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part Two
 Aristophanes: Plutus
 Offenbach: *Ba-Ta-Clan*
Ballet Under the Stars