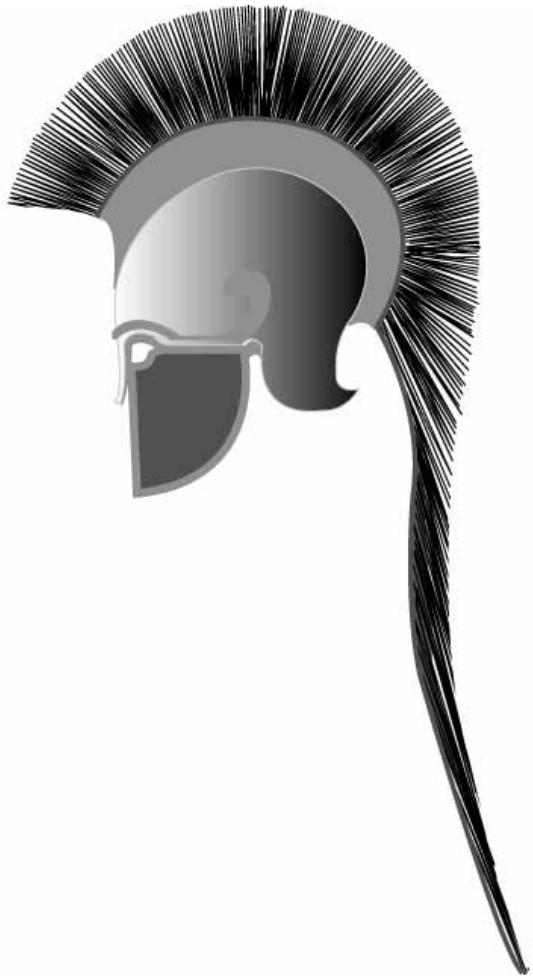

Genesius Guild

2003 Season
Study Guide

Genesius Guild
2003 Summer Season

For 47 years, the Genesius Guild has 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 Genesius Theatre Foundation, a tax-exempt organization charged with promoting the classics; by the Rock Island Park Board, continuing an 80-year commitment to supporting local dramatic performance; through 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**.

The Genesius Guild gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the following agencies, corporations, and foundations for the preparation and publication of this study guide.

Illinois Humanities Council

Rock Island Community Foundation

The Moline Foundation

TARGET

Summer Schedule
2003

Tryouts
June 1 and 8 (1 pm)
June 3 and 5 (7 pm)

June 14, 15 June 21, 22	Gilbert & Sullivan: "Trial By Jury" (Opera At Augustana)
June 28, 29 July 5, 6	Shakespeare: "Henry IV, Part One" (Prince Hal & Hotspur)
July 12, 13 July 19, 20	Euripides: "The Bacchae"
July 26, 27 August 2, 3	Shakespeare: "Henry IV, Part Two (Falstaff & the Young King)
August 9, 10 August 16, 17	Aristophanes: "Plutus" (a contemporary version)
August 22, 23, 24	"Ballet Under the Stars" (Ballet Quad Cities)

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

About the 2003 Schedule

The summer begins with an encore production by "Opera@Augustana." This time, it's a one-act comedy by the Victorian team of Gilbert and Sullivan, a humorous treatment of a man's attempt to avoid a suit brought by his fiancee, in front of a seriously compromised judge and jury.

This season also brings the guild back to its initial Shakespearean production: "Henry IV," first staged in 1960. That history play was selected to inaugurate a new Shakespeare tradition because it seems to have it all: strong plot, solid characters, lofty poetry, romance, sword-play, and excellent humor - a generous sampling of the Bard's dramatic art; a play with an immediate appeal to audiences at all levels. The two separate plays tell two separate, yet interconnected, stories.

The Euripides production, "The Bacchae" is a stunning cry against the universe by an embittered man at the end of his life. It has been called "terrifying," not because of spectacular effects - the Greeks managed to have all the bloody scenes handled offstage - but because of what it says about the human condition and the indifference of the Greek gods to human sufffering.

Most of Aristophanes' comedies dealt with war and peace, being written when Athens and Sparta were locked in the death-struggle of the Peloponnesian War. Aristophanes used his plays to ridicule the impulse to go to war and to urge an end to the fighting. In "Plutus," he addresses a more benign and universal subject: the unfair distribution of wealth on earth.

The season ends with the guild's seventh annual "Ballet Under the Stars," a program by Ballet Quad Cities, the community's resident, professional ballet company. The program of diverse dances not only concludes the guild's summer program, but also serves as an introduction to BQC's 2003 - 2004 season.

Gilbert & Sullivan

These two names have been inseparable in the public mind since they began their collaboration in 1871 in a series of light operas which are still performed around the world.

William Schwenck Gilbert was born in 1836 and worked for a while as an unsuccessful lawyer in London. He started contributing amusing verses to "Fun" magazine under the pen-name of Bab (a childhood nickname). He later published "Bab Ballads" and contributed light material to the celebrated humor magazine, "Punch."

Arthur Seymour Sullivan was trained as a serious musician and composed in a variety of forms. He was also something of a scholar. Working with the eminent musicologist, Sir George Grove, he discovered the lost "Rosamunde" music by Schubert. He was well-known in his day as the composer of "The Lost Chord," a sentimental, quasi-religious song that was soon popular in all English-speaking countries. Ironically, he is remembered for his "light"work with Gilbert rather than for his "serious" compositions.

Gilbert and Sullivan were brought together in 1871 to produce "Thespis," a satirical treatment of the Olympian gods, noted as much for its chorus girls as for its music. Four years later, under the astute management of impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte, their second collaboration, "Trial By Jury," initiated an unbroken string of 14 enormously popular comic operas.

Sullivan's music provided the perfect setting for Gilbert's light, ludicrous, topsy-turvy wit. Their long association earned both men knighthoods and personal fortunes, but it was marked by disagreements and separations. An argument over expensive carpeting in the Savoy Theatre, built expressly for their works in 1881, eventually led to a separation.

The recent movie, "Topsy Turvy," is about their working relationship.

Trial By Jury

by Gilbert & Sullivan

This short work began as a comic ballad written by Gilbert for "Fun" magazine. The work was based on Gilbert's experiences as a young lawyer in Clerkenwell. The author later submitted it to impresario Carl Rosa as a possible libretto for an opera. Arthur Sullivan composed the music and Gilbert proposed its performance to Doyly Carte in 1874. It was presented, with Sullivan conducting, at the Royalty Theatre in London on March 25, 1875, as the final part of a triptych of one-act operas. It was a tremendous success and survived its counterparts to have a run of 131 performances.

* * *

A breach of promise suit is brought by the pretty, scheming Angelina against the ingenuous defendant Edwin. It is obvious the Court Usher and all-male jury sympathize with the beautiful plaintiff. Edwin pleads his case, arguing that, while he once was in love with Angelina, he now is infatuated with another. The jury agrees that they were once impetuous young men like him, but are now respectable and can no longer condone his conduct.

The judge enters and tells that he became a judge by marrying a prominent attorney's "elderly, ugly daughter" who might "very well pass for 43 in the dark with the light behind her." Once he became rich himself, he then divorced his wife and now is ready to try this case for "Breach of Promise of Marriage."

The plaintiff enters with her bridesmaids and gives her tearful testimony. In desperation, Edwin offers to marriage Angelina as well as his present love, but that, it is pointed out, would be another crime.

After many shifts of argument, the trial ends happily, with the judge claiming Angelina for himself.

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 through 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 two plots which were drawn from his own imagination. The majority of his works were based on earlier plays 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.

Hoewever 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 in the household of Lord Southampton, 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.

Henry IV, Parts One and Two

by William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's history plays take us through the War of the Roses, a struggle between two great families, descended from King Edward III, for the throne of England. The division begins in "Richard II," when that king, of the House of York, is deposed by Henry Bolingbroke of the House of Lancaster, who will become Henry IV.

The two Henry IV plays take us through this king's reign, ending with the coronation of his ne'er-do-well son, Prince Hal, as Henry V. In subsequent plays, we follow the fortunes of these two families as first one, then the other, assumes the throne, culminating in "Richard III" with the victory of Henry VII, who ends the War of the Roses by combining both royal lines into the House of Tudor and ruthlessly killing off all claimants to the throne.

What gives the Henry IV plays their great appeal is the presence of a fat, rascally knight named Falstaff, with whom Prince Hal spends his youth. Falstaff is one of Shakespeare's most memorable characters and his comedy tends to dominate the action. He was so popular with audiences that Shakespeare had to kill him off in "Henry V," lest he detract from the heroism of young King Henry V.

"Henry IV, Part One," deals with a rebellion against King Henry by his former allies. The subplot concerns the idle life led by the heir to the throne, Prince Hal, who spends his time with London's riff-raff, even going so far as to join them in robbery.

The play ends with the defeat of one faction of the rebels led by Hotspur, a young man as much in love with honor and battle as Hal is with pleasure.

"Henry IV, Part Two" picks up the story ten years later (although Shakespeare makes it seem to follow Part One immediately). The play continues the fight against the balance of Henry IV's enemies, but the historical action merely serves as a framework for the foolery of the "tavern gang" of Falstaff and his cronies. At play's end, Hal, now the king, coldly dismisses the fat knight and all his former friends, laying the groundwork for his appearance as the virtuous hero king in "Henry V."

The machinations of English royalty were common knowledge to English citizens. What made these plays so appealing to theatre-goers was Shakespeare's intimate knowledge of the "underside" of English society and the vitality, insight, and accuracy with which he brings it to the stage.

The plays were not written in chronological order. As nearly as scholars can place them, they follow in this sequence:

Henry VI, Parts One through Three	1589 - 1591
Richard III	1592-93
Richard II	1595
Henry IV, Parts One & Two	1596-98
Henry V	1599

The historical sequence of kings:

Richard II	(1377 - 1399)
Henry IV	(1399 - 1413)
Henry V	(1413 - 1422)
Henry VI	(1422 - 1461)
Edward IV	(1461 - 1483)
Edward V	(1483 - 1483)
Richard III	(1483 - 1485)
Henry VII	(1485 - 1509)

(Lancastrian kings are all named Henry; others are of the House of York)

Part One

The play begins with Henry IV hoping to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as penance for the murder of King Richard II. But news of a victory by the Welshman, Owen Glendower, over Lord Mortimer interrupts his hopes. He then learns that young Harry Percy (Hotspur), fighting in Scotland, has taken numerous prisoners, but refuses to turn them over to the king. Henry sees in all this a plot by Worcester, Hotspur's uncle, to usurp the throne.

The second scene takes us to the Boar's Head tavern, where Prince Hal spends his time with Sir John Falstaff, a fat knight, given more to wine and scandalous behavior than to military exploits. Ned Poins, one of Hal's dissolute friends, enters with news that a quantity of gold and valuables will be passing through Eastcheap on its way to Canterbury. It would be an easy matter for them to waylay and rob the travellers. Hal refuses, but when Falstaff leaves, Poins tells him that they should prompt Falstaff to the theft and them rob him, in order to hear what lies he will tell afterward. Hal agrees and, when alone, excuses his behavior by claiming that he will redeem all when he becomes king.

King Henry meets with Worcester, Northumberland, and Northumberland's son, Hotspur. A quarrel erupts and the king threatens his former allies if they do not obey him. Hotspur is beside himself with anger and is only calmed down when his uncle and father tell him that they have allied with others, including former Scotch and Welsh enemies, to overthrow the king.

Carriers pause in their journey as one of Falstaff's cronies sizes up the prospect for robbing them. Further down the road, the thieves gather, but Poins and Hal have tied Falstaff's horse a distance away, so that the fat knight must go afoot. Hal and Poins leave and put on disguises. Falstaff and his men rob the travellers, bind them, and start sharing the money. Poins and Hal leap out at them, and chase the would-be thieves away. They then take the money and head back to the tavern to hear what Falstaff will say.

Hospur receives news that an ally on whom he counted has decided not to join the rebellion. As he prepares to leave, his wife enters and demands to know what is going on in a playful scene between the two young lovers.

Prince Hal and Poins return to the tavern where the prince spends a considerable amount of time teasing a slow-witted servant boy. When Falstaff enters with his comrades, he tells a story of being set upon and robbed by men who multiply in number as the tale continues. When Hal and Poins reveal the truth, Falstaff has a ready explanation, but is disappointed to learn that Hal has returned the money.

A messenger arrives with news of the imminent rebellion. Falstaff tells Hal that his father will have harsh words for him soon, and suggests that they practice for the meeting. Falstaff plays King Henry at first, but Hal insists that they change places in a what becomes a very funny scene.

A sheriff arrives looking for the thieves, especially a very fat one. Falstaff has hidden behind a curtain and Hal sends the sheriff away. Looking behind the curtain, he finds Falstaff asleep and goes through his pockets, finding that the fat knight spends all his money on sack (a form of wine).

The rebel conspirators meet, but soon get into an argument. Hotspur cannot take Owen Glendower's claims of spiritual powers seriously. His uncle Worcester calms him down as the ladies enter. Mortimer's wife sings a Welsh song as Hotspur and his wife tease one another lovingly.

Prince Hal is summoned into his father's presence and is roundly scolded for his behavior. He convinces the king of his loyalty and promises to take a leading role in the coming battle.

Falstaff complains to the hostess of the tavern that someone picked his pocket while he was asleep and claims to have lost much money and a valuable ring. Hal enters and shows Falstaff yet again to be a liar. He then tells Falstaff that he has obtained a command for him in the war - on foot - and leaves to join the war.

As Hotspur, Worcester, and their Scots ally, Douglas, prepare for battle, they learn that Hotspur's father, Northumberland, is ill and cannot join them. Sir Richard Vernon enters to inform them that Owen Glendower is delayed and will not be in the field either. Hotspur refuses to back down and urges them forward to fight.

Falstaff comes to the field with a ragged troop of men he has impressed. He has let the wealthy buy out their service by using poor men as substitutes. Hal and Westmoreland enter and all press on to the battle.

The rebels argue, but Hotspur insists on fighting that very night. A messenger comes from Henry IV with offer of a parley. In the next brief scene, some of Hotspur's allies, absent from the field, worry about the outcome of the battle that is shaping up at Shrewsbury.

In parley, the king offers gracious terms to Worcester and Vernon if they will lay down their arms. Hal offers to fight Hotspur in single combat, but the king refuses.

As they return, Worcester gets Vernon to agree not to tell Hotspur of the king's generous offer. A messenger enters to tell them the king is in the field and they leave to fight.

In the heat of battle, the Scotsman Douglas kills a man disguised as Henry IV. After he and Hotspur leave, Falstaff enters, frightened that he might have to fight. When Hal enters, Falstaff boasts of his deeds. Hal tries to take a pistol from Falstaff's case, only to find that it contains a bottle of sack.

Douglas encounters the real King Henry and is on the point of defeating him when Hal enters and drives Douglas away. Hotspur then encounters Hal and they fight as Falstaff watches. Douglas re-enters to fight with Falstaff who quickly feigns death. Hal gives Hotspur a mortal wound and the young man dies in the prince's arms. Hal then spies Falstaff, whom he assumes to be dead. After he leaves, Falstaff gets up, stabs the dead Hotspur in the thigh and takes him up on his back, to claim him as his victim.

Hal returns with his brother John and is amazed to find Falstaff alive, claiming to have defeated Hotspur in single combat. The battle ends in victory for Henry's forces and the play ends with a promise to continue the fight until all the rebels are defeated.

* * *

Part Two

An actor who personifies "Rumor" starts the play by relating how contradictory accounts of the recent Battle of Shrewsbury are being circulated.

In the first scene, this is demonstrated as Lord Northumberland receives news that his son, Hotspur, has defeated the king, only to hear from a second messenger that Hotspur is dead and the king, victorious. Grieved at the news, Northumberland resolves to continue the fight, despite his illness.

Falstaff, now attended by a tiny page, begins his domination of the play with a humorous monologue. He is accosted by the Chief Justice, who once arrested Prince Hal for striking him. He accuses Falstaff of robbery but Falstaff claims the protection of Prince Hal and the Chief Justice leaves him alone, as Falstaff claims he is on his way to York to serve the king.

Another groups of malcontents plot to rebel against the king: Mowbray, Archbishop York, Hastings, and Lord Bardolph.

Hostess Quickly has called in officers Fang and Snare to arrest Falstaff in order to collect the money he owes her. In the scuffle that follows, the Chief Justice enters and Falstaff promises to pay his debts. The Chief Justice receives a message that a war is at hand.

Hal tells Poins of his father's illness and his distress at the news. The page brings a letter from Falstaff and the prince decides that he and Poins will disguise themselves as servants to watch Falstaff's behavior with Hostess Quickly and Doll Tearsheet.

Hotspur's widow urges his father, Northumberland, not to fight, but to escape to Scotland. He reluctantly agrees.

There follows a scene of foolery at the tavern with Hal and Poins watching an affecting scene between Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet in which Falstaff calls the prince a shallow fellow who might make a good servant. When Hal and Poins reveal themselves, Falstaff cleverly excuses himself. The tavern gang (Quickly, Tearsheet, Bardolph, and Peto) are joined by Ancient Pistol, a florid braggart who will continue from this point into "Henry V." Word comes that a battle is taking shape and the Prince and Poins leave hurriedly.

King Henry, plagued by illness and remorse, cannot sleep. His monologue on this theme is a memorable one. Warwick assures him that his army will emerge victorious.

A long scene ensues, introducing Justices Shallow and Silence. Shallow was a student with Sir John Falstaff in their youth. The scene involves the recruitment of a shabby troop and the reminiscenses of Falstaff and Shallow: a warm and richly funny sequence.

Westmoreland visits the rebels, rebukes them, and asks them to parley with Prince John, Hal's brother, who will offer them generous terms if they will quit the field. They agree to meet with him.

Prince John meets the rebels and offers them fair terms. The rebels dismiss their army, whereupon Prince John arrests them as traitors.

Sir John Colville surrenders to Falstaff who turns him over to Prince John. Prince John sends Colville to execution with the others and leaves. Falstaff complains that this prince is no friend of his, as is his brother. He explains that Prince John's cold nature is due to his not drinking sherry.

King Henry, very ill, receives news of his victory, but worries still about Hal. He is carried into the Jerusalem chamber.

Hal visits his sleeping father. He fears that he is dead. Musing on the crown, he places it on his head and briefly leaves the room. The king awakens and sees that his crown is missing. When Hal returns, the king chastises him for wishing him dead and himself the king. Hal movingly defends himself and the king, reassured, gives him advice on how to rule when he comes to the throne.

After Shallow converses with his servant, Falstaff prepares to leave for London, musing once again on Shallow's ridiculous behavior.

The Chief Justice hears that the king has died and fears that he will suffer under the new king, having jailed him in the pursuit of his duty. Hal enters and tells the Chief Justice that not only does he bear him no ill will, but will use him as his counsellor, having need of such an honest and upright man.

Falstaff visits with Shallow. Pistol enters with news that the king is dead; Hal is now the new king. Falstaff and everyone prepare to rush off to London to revel in their new fortune under a king who is their friend.

Officers come to the tavern to arrest Hostess Quickly and Doll Tearsheet on orders from the Chief Justice.

Falstaff, Shallow and friends wait in the street to see King Henry V pass by. When he comes into view, Falstaff calls out to him, only to be rebuked and dismissed. The Chief Justice arrests them all.

Notes on the Henry IV Plays

The poet Robert Auden asserted that "It is difficult to imagine that a historical play as good as Henry IV will ever again be written."

It's a safe bet. This play sums up all of the things that made Shakespeare so wildly popular in his own time and place: lofty poetry, vivid characters, ample swordplay, romance, and comedy of the highest order.

This is arguably the best play with which to begin a study of Shakespeare. It delights audiences when seen and, after, rewards close reading.

On one level, the play is a study in contrast between the impetuous, hyper-active, honor-struck Harry Percy (Hotspur) and the cool, calculating, heir to the throne, Prince Hal. Shakespeare sharpens the difference between them until they meet and settle their rivalry on the field of battle.

A contrast may also be drawn between Hotspur and Falstaff. Both are voluble speakers. But Hotspur is active where Falstaff is passive. Hotspur is willing to force circumstance to afford him opportunity; he is willing to fight insuperable odds. Falstaff "surrrenders to the moment" as Auden puts it. He takes only those opportunities circumstance gives him.

It is interesting to note that Hotspur scorns "mincing poetry," yet his language is vivid and dramatic, almost aflame with ambition and desire. Yet his desire is not for mundane or homely things, but for honor in the field of battle and he is reckless in pursuit of it.

King Henry is two different people in the two plays. In Part One he is vigorous and involved. In Part Two, he is old and passive. He and his son are both calculating people. The father held himself aloof from the common crowd while his son spends all his time consorting with commoners, yet both cynically use people and situations to achieve their ends.

King Henry seems obsessed with worry, troubled by the manner in which he claimed the throne, guilty over Richard II's murder, and as possessive of his crown as a miser is of his gold. His speeches can be magnificent, but he becomes a much diminished character as the plays proceed.

There is a diminishment in Falstaff as well. While he is witty throughout, in Part One his imagery is drawn from Biblical and literary sources and displays a fine sensitivity to nature and sport. In Part Two, his images become more grotesque and ribald, betraying a certain deterioration of spirit.

The Falstaff subplot runs away with the story. Fairly balanced with the main plot in Part One, Falstaff and his cohorts simply swamp the kingly quarrels in Part Two. The first play builds to an exciting military climax while the impending battle in the second is avoided by the treacherous negotiations deceitfully conducted by Prince John.

Shakespeare gives all his characters their due; when Hotspur and Falstaff speak of honor, their opposite views are clearly and forcefully stated. Every role, however brief, is memorable. Even the absent carrier, Robin, in Act II, Scene 1, is fully drawn in a single line: “Poor fellow never joy’d since the price of oats rose, it was the death of him”

Euripides

Euripides was born between 480 and 484 B.C.E., mostly probably on the island of Salamis. He was the son of Muesarchus (or Muesarchides) and grew up in a well-to-do family. It's likely that his mother was of a prominent family; Aristophanes' joke that she was a green-grocer was funny because it so far off the mark.

Little is known of his life, apart from the fact that he began his professional career as a painter. He was moderate in his views, but did not take an active part in public life as did Aeschylus and Sophocles. Commentators speculate that he was morose and deduce from his plays that he was a misogynist. These are simply guesses.

Certainly he was interested in philosophy and the issues of his day. Although from the same period as Sophocles, his tragedies seem to be from a different age. His plays focus on individuals, ideas, and passions rather than on community. During his lifetime he aroused great interest and great opposition. In 408 B.C.E. he visited the court of Archelaus, King of Macedon, and died there around 406/407 B.C.E. Sophocles is said to have dressed the chorus of his next play in mourning as a tribute.

Euripides was the third of the classic Greek playwrights and author of some 90 dramas, only 19 complete scripts of which survive. Littlle regarded in his lifetime, he became extraordinarily popular after his death and his plays were often revived. At the beginning of his career, he wrote formal tragedies, but gradually his stories evolved into hybrid forms.

While his plots were popular and exciting, he sometimes achieved his effects at the cost of consistent character development. He devised involving stories, but often solved them quickly by having a god intervene at the end of the play.

(The term for this is "deus ex machina" - a Latin phrase meaning, literally, "the god from the machine." This comes of the practice in Greek theatre of having the god appear above the building at the rear of the stage area and coming down in some kind of hoist.)

He was awarded first prize only five times, the last coming after his death. This final prize was for "The Bacchae.

Euripides' surviving plays:

Alcestis
Andromache
The Bacchae
The Children of Herakles
The Cyclops (a satyr play)
Elektra
Hecuba
Helen
Herakles
Hippolytus
Ion
Iphigenia in Aulis
Iphigenia in Taurus
Medea
Orestes
The Phoenician Women
Rhesus (possibly by someone else)
The Suppliant Women
The Trojan Women

You might note the sequence of plays beginning with "Hecuba" and ending with "Iphigenia in Taurus." These seven plays were in a single volume of a complete collection of Euripides' works and have survived by chance.

Over the years, the bulk of classic dramas have been lost in the burning of great libraries, and the loss of personal collections through the accidents and ravages of time. It is almost miraculous that we have the few copies which remain.

One of the most hopeful prospects for discovering additional texts is in the exhumation of graves in Egypt. Papyrus texts were often used in the mumification of commoners and, as they have been examined by archeologists, some surprising discoveries have been made.

For example, the only copy we have of a play by the Greek writer Menander - a profound influence on Roman and Elizabethan playwrights -was taken from an Egyptian corpse in modern times.

The Bacchae

by Euripides

This play is a frightening study of the beauty and horror of religious ecstasy. It sets in opposition life in nature and life in a cosmopolitan setting. It prompts the question of what lies beneath the constraints of civilization and what good and painful things can happen when we free ourselves of those constraints.

It also presents an ancient view of the gods as coldly indifferent to the sufferings of humanity, jealous of their prerogatives, and unspeakably cruel in their punishments. It has been said that none of the characters in this play, divine or human, come off well.

Some commentators consider this work to be Euripides' savage, embittered valedictory to the world as he saw it.

* * *

The god Dionysos begins the play's prologue in the shape of a handsome, young man. He announces that he has come to introduce his worship and rites to Thebes, the city and land of his mother, Semele. He tells of his conception by Zeus, the father of the gods, and how Semele tricked Zeus into revealing himself. The sight destroyed her, but the unborn baby was saved and placed in his father's thigh, from whence he was born.

The land is now ruled by Pentheus, son of Agave, who is sister to Semele. He received his authority from Kadmus, father of Semele and Agave. Dionysos makes it clear that Pentheus must accept his worship and he summons his followers, women of Asia, to enter the city and assist him.

The chorus dances in, singing a hymn to Bacchus (Dionysos), detailing his attributes and the service due him.

Scene One introduces Kadmus, former ruler of Thebes, and the aged hermaphroditic prophet, Teiresias. Both have dressed in faun skins in order to join in the Bacchic rites outside city walls. Pentheus enters and scolds

the two old men for their foolishness, declaring that the story of Semele giving birth to a god is a fiction. He is furious that his mother has also joined the bacchantes. Teiresias lectures Pentheus on the need to give all the gods their due, but the young man has decided to have the young man who is preaching this new religion (Dionysos in disguise) arrested.

The chorus sings Ode I, which warns that Pentheus' behavior is wrong and dangerous. They end with further praise of Dionysos.

In Scene II, the disguised Dionysos is brought before Pentheus in chains. After a fruitless argument, Pentheus sends Dionysos to prison.

In Ode II, the chorus again praises Dionysos and gives ominous hints of the danger in which Pentheus has placed himself.

An earthquake opens Scene III and Dioynsos walks out of the palace, free and unfettered. He tells the chorus how easily he deceived his captors and walked to freedom.

Pentheus comes from the palace, furious and upset. He sees and threatens Dionysos again, but a messenger interrupts. He has come from the slopes of Mount Kithairon where he has seen the women in their Bacchic rites. At first, the crowd was peaceful, causing milk and honey to gush from the ground, suckling young animals as if they were babes. But men, observing the rites, decided to capture Agave and return her to the king. At this point, the women went wild, tearing apart with their bare hands all living things they encountered. The messenger escaped to bring the king this fearful news.

Pentheus decides to summon his army and move against the women. But Dionysos stops him with a temptation: how would he like to spy on the women in their

revels? Pentheus succumbs and goes into the palace. Dionysos follows to effect the king's transformation.

The chorus speaks of wisdom and submission to the gods in Ode III.

Scene IV opens with Dioynsos summoning Pentheus from the palace. He has dressed the king in a gown and made him up to look like a woman. He then leads the submissive king off to witness the revels.

The chorus calls out for veageance in Ode IV.

A second messenger enters in Scene V to tell of the king's fate. In order that Pentheus might see better, Dionysos bends a tall tree to the ground and sets the king upon it. As he rises in the air, he is spied by the women who charge him and bring him to the ground where his mother, Agave, tears him apart with her bare hands, thinking it is some beast she has killed. She is returning to the city with Pentheus' head impaled on a pole.

The chorus sings of their victory over Pentheus in Ode V.

Agave enters, bearing her trophy, calling on the women to celebrate with her. Kadmos follows, with the gathered remnants of his grandson's body. Slowly, he brings Agave out of her trance. When she sees Pentheus' head, she screams in terror.

Dionysos then appears on top of the palace and orders Agave to leave the city. He tells Kadmos that he and his wife, the goddess Harmony, will be turned into serpents and driven forth as well. But they will be redeemed by the god Ares, Harmony's father, later on. Kadmos pleads for mercy, but Dionysos is unmoved.

The chorus leaves the stage, singing of the gods' mysterious ways.

Thoughts about the play

As long as human beings have been self-aware (and just when that occurred in human history is a fascinating subject for study and discussion) they have speculated about the meaning of life.

Through science, humans have subjected all experience to rigorous, self-correcting study. But the sciences do not deal with the ultimates of life. Where science ends, philosophy begins, seeking to find meaning and purpose in our existence.

Religion is also concerned with ultimate answers, but seeks them from divine revelation, especially from sacred texts which have been accumulated over time: the Torah, the Gospels, the Quran, and sacred writing of India and the Orient. These religious sources stand apart from science and do not depend on objective study.

There is a third way to deal with ultimate questions and that is tragedy. We use the term to mean something sad or horrific, but that is just one aspect of tragedy. The term actually means a kind of traversal in search of truth; an illustration of some aspect of life's meaning.

A tragedy usually involves a person of exceptional ability who sets out to achieve a goal and never deviates from it, seeing it through to its conclusion. The audience is invited to watch the process and draw personal conclusions from it.

"The Bacchae" examines one of the major ethical debates of the Fifth Century B.C.E.: the conflict between nomos and physis. (The following is adapted, in part, from an article by classicist Charles Segal)

Nomos (law or custom) stands for social practices and established institutions. The play concerns the attempt to bring Dionysian worship safely into the realm of accepted custom.

Physis (roughly, nature) refers to the instincts, appetites, and demands of the body which are kept in check by Nomos. It could be argued that Nomos is an artificial restraint on something more basic than human institutions. Physis includes aspects of the natural world beyond human control, not made by human design, but to which humans may be subject.

Nomos is used to keep these aggressive, dangerous traits under control and to make orderly society possible. If everyone lived by the instinctual impulses we share with animals, what we call civilization would be impossible.

In the play, Pentheus attempts to ban what he considers a dangerous religious rite for the good of the community. In doing so, he unwittingly unleases its deeper, more frightening characteristics. Religious ecstasy, when placed under constraint, may erupt in dangerous, even disastrous ways.

The Nomos-Physis dichotomy is just one aspect of this fascinating play, but it offers perhaps the most fruitful material for discussion. The end result of the actions of both Dionysos and Pentheus bring death and social upheaval to the city of Thebes. The god is no better than the man in this regard. Religon can be as savage in its expression as human institutions.

Dionysos may be viewed as the god of Letting Go. Again and again in the play, he is cited as The Releaser, one who liberates humans from the mundane restraints of life through wine, singing, dancing, and illusion-inducing power of the mask and theatre.

But to what extent may one release oneself from the safety of those rules and conventions which constitute an orderly and balanced society? How much of one should a person give up for the other?

As do all tragedies, “The Bacchae” elicits these and other thoughts, which is why watching and contemplating such plays helps us come to an understanding of what it means to be human.

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.E. 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."

His comedies are a fascinating blend of lyricism, satire, and obscenity. It's not often that his plays are presented as written; many of them would cause a scandal if not abridged or adapted.

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 - Philippos, Araros, and Nikostratos - all of whom followed in his profession.

Most of Aristophanes' comedies dealt with the ongoing (and, ultimately, losing) war with Sparta. He ridicules Athenian generals and conjures up outlandish means of obtaining peace.

After Athens lost the war in 404 B.C.E., Aristophanes' plays lost some of their bite. He began to write comedies which deal, not so much with politics, as with with the human condition. These include "Ecclesiazusae" (a satire in which the poet imagines that women have taken over the government), and "Plutus."

Aristophanes' surviving comedies:

The Acharnians
The Birds
The Clouds
Ecclesiazusae
The Frogs
The Knights
Lysistrata
Peace
Plutus
Thesmophoriazusae
The Wasps

Plutus

by Aristophanes

This play is strikingly different from all which preceded it. Some commentators consider it an example of a new genre, Middle Comedy, of which it is the only example. It was to be followed by New Comedy, exemplified by the humorous, romantic writing of Meander. Again, we have only one example of New Comedy, "The Diskolos."

In "Plutus," Aristophanes does not attack an individual or specific situation, but rather offers a travesty of myth which can be widely understood. His premise is that good men are afflicted with poverty because Plutus (Wealth) is blind.

When his blindness is miraculously cured, the improvement this brings about obviously will be quickly undercut by human greed and ambition.

Because of its easily understood theme and action, "Plutus" was one of Aristophanes' most widely read plays.

Instead of written choral interludes between scenes, the text simply indicates a place for them. It shares this characteristic with New Comedy and may mark the beginning of such a tradition.

* * *

The blind god Plutus is groping his way along an Athenian street, followed by Chremylus and his slave, Cario. When Cario asks why they are doing this, his master tells him that the Oracle at Delphi told him to follow the first man he met if he wished to be wealthy.

When they finally accost Plutus, they learn his identity. Plutus pleads to be let go, claiming that, once men know who he is, they imprison him. Chremylus swears that he is not that sort of fellow and to prove it, he will find a means of curing the god's blindness so that he can give his wealth to deserving men.

A chorus of poor, but deserving men enter, excited by the prospect of finally receiving their just rewards in life. A shady character, Blepsidemus, discovers that Chremylus is newly rich and plots to be cut in on his friend's good fortune. He bids farewell to Lady Poverty, who is distressed to learn that she will be losing the company of honest men and will soon be served by formerly-rich scoundrels.

(At is point, the guild's version of the plot wanders off into a series of plots by various suspect persons and groups to secure the blessings of wealth. These are portrayed in a variety of songs and routines of a vaudevillian nature.)

At the play's conclusion, Plutus learns that, even with his sight restored and despite his determination to reward only the honest, his wealth will ultimately wind up in the hands of the unscrupulous.

Ballet QUAD CITIES

For the seventh year, Ballet Quad Cities will present a free program in Lincoln Park as part of the Genesius Guild's summer schedule of classic performances. This year, "Ballet Under the Stars" will move from the beginning of the summer schedule to the end, and will present several works for three consecutive evenings: August 22, 23, and 24 (Friday through Sunday).

With this shift, "Ballet Under the Stars" not only ends the guild's season, but also provides an introduction to BQC's winter season.

The program will be drawn from the BQC repertoire of favorite innovative and original ballets.

GENESIUS GUILD SUMMER SEASONS

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

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:	*Cosi fan tutte*
1990	Aeschylus:	The Oresteia Agamemnon The Choephores 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
Gilbert & Sullivan: Trial by Jury
Ballet Under the Stars