



BEYOND THE STAGE

Dramaturgy Notes for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival



JACK OF ALL TRADES

“Before working for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival (ISF), I thought Shakespeare was archaic, boring, and all in iambic pentameter,” says Jack Hradecky, a junior acting major at Illinois State University and former ISF acting intern and Sutter Scholar, “But after working with professional actors during the Festival to analyze texts, I’ve started to love raw, gritty Shakespeare. It’s not all high and flowery language. It’s for everyone. It shouldn’t be pretentious.”

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Hradecky has recently been cast in the Illinois State University School of Theatre and Dance’s production of *Twelfth Night*, which opens later this month. He plays Malvolio, one of Shakespeare’s most intriguing and controversial characters. Malvolio is Olivia’s social climbing servant, whose conservatism and scornfulness aggravate the other members of the house. To seek revenge, the rowdy bunch play cruel yet hilarious tricks on him. The role has no lack of high

language and no lack of grit; he speaks some of Shakespeare's most renowned lines: "Some men are born great, some men achieve greatness, and some men have greatness thrust upon them."

Hradecky is not the only ISF alum to take part in this production of *Twelfth Night*. The sheer number of ISF alumni involved in *Twelfth Night* speaks greatly to the ability the Festival has to impart a love and competency of Shakespeare's works. Nic McMinn utilizes his Shakespearian expertise as director, and Connor Kubil uses the skills of organization and communication that she honed at ISF as stage manager. Designers John Stark (set), Amanda Bedker (costume), Gregory Kontos (sound), Megan Compton (hair and makeup), and Jaxson Carey (props) continue their behind-the-scenes work to bring Shakespeare's world to life. ISF alumni also take the stage as actors including Asa Wallace (Feste), Parker Carbine (Orsino), Rachel Katz (Olivia), Rondale Gray (Sir Andrew), and Derek Rey (Sebastian). ISF has provided an opportunity for these young actors and designers to grow in their admiration and understanding of Shakespeare, as well as their professional theatre experience.

Hradecky aims to achieve greatness by applying the model of character study he learned from ISF to his current role. "There are a million different ways to read Shakespeare. I first make sure I understand the language of the text, analyze the character's actions and desires, then find how to physically manifest the character onstage," Hradecky describes, "Right now I am asking myself, 'How do I portray the conflicting goals and ideas surrounding Malvolio?'"



Jack Hradecky in
ISF's *Henry V* (2018)

ISF has had a profound impact on not only Hradecky's preparedness for professional theatre work, but also his love of Shakespeare. He recalls, "When I worked on *Henry V* [during the 2018 season] with Karen Kessler, she introduced me to Shakespeare that was meant for the common audience. It was exciting, fast paced, and had depth in language and action. I hope to bring this excitement and accessibility to *Twelfth Night*."

Now Hradecky is one of the experienced actors in the room as the cast of *Twelfth Night* prepares to open. "We have an interesting concept playing with the fluidity of gender and sexuality," he says, "We have a cast with a variety of experiences with Shakespeare. It is exciting seeing less experienced actors make discoveries and more experienced actors all approach the text differently. It will be a very fun show."

Twelfth Night is directed by Nic McMinn. The performances run October 25, 26, 29, 30, 31 and November 1, 2 at 7:30 p.m. and October 27 at 2 p.m. at the Center for the Performing Arts Theatre at Illinois State University. Tickets are \$12 for students and seniors and \$17 for adults and are available at the box office at (309) 438-2535 or online at Ticketmaster.com.