



THE BOOK OF WILL

BY LAUREN
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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THE BOOK OF WILL was originally commissioned by and produced at the Denver Center Theatre Company (Kent Thompson, Artistic Director; Charles Varin, Managing Director), a division of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, in Denver, Colorado, on January 13, 2017. It was directed by Davis McCallum, the scenic design was by Sandra Goldmark, the costume design was by Camille Assaf, the lighting design was by Paul Toben, the sound design was by Stowe Nelson, the dramaturg was Douglas Langworthy, the voice and dialect coach was Kathryn G. Maes, and the stage manager was Kurt Van Raden. The cast was as follows:

HENRY CONDELL Kurt Rhoads
JOHN HEMINGES Liam Craig
RICHARD BURBAGE/
BEN JONSON/HORATIO Triney Sandoval
ALICE HEMINGES/
SUSANNAH SHAKESPEARE Jennifer Le Blanc
ELIZABETH CONDELL/
EMILIA BASSANO LANIER Miriam A. Laube
REBECCA HEMINGES/
ANNE HATHAWAY SHAKESPEARE Nance Williamson
ED KNIGHT/ISAAC JAGGARD Andy Nagraj
RALPH CRANE/BARMAN/
COMPOSITOR/FRANCISCO Rodney Lizcano
WILLIAM JAGGARD/BARMAN 2/
SIR EDWARD DERING Wesley Mann
MARCUS/BOY HAMLET/
CRIER/BERNARDO Thaddeus Fitzpatrick

The subsequent rolling world premiere of THE BOOK OF WILL was produced by Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival (Davis McCallum, Artistic Director; Kate Liberman, Managing Director) in Garrison, New York, in June, 2017. It was directed by Davis McCallum, the scenic design was by Sandra Goldmark, the costume design was by Martha Hally, the lighting design was by Eric Southern, the sound design was by Stowe Nelson, the prop design was by Theresa Pierce, and the stage manager was Marci Skolnick. The cast was as follows:

HENRY CONDELL Kurt Rhoads
 JOHN HEMINGES Sean McNall
 RICHARD BURBAGE/BEN JONSON Stephen Paul Johnson
 ALICE HEMINGES Kerry Warren
 BOY HAMLET/FRANCISCO Sky Smith
 BARMAN/BERNARDO Luis Quintero
 BARMAN 2/WILLIAM JAGGARD/
 SIR EDWARD DERING David Ryan Smith
 ELIZABETH CONDELL/
 EMILIA BASSANO LANIER Krystel Lucas
 REBECCA HEMINGES/
 ANNE HATHAWAY Mary Bacon
 RALPH CRANE/HORATIO Zach Fike Hodges
 ISAAC JAGGARD Michael Broadhurst
 MARCUS Marielle Young
 COMPOSITOR Serena Ebony Miller
 SUSANNAH Maryn Shaw
 CRIER/MARCELLUS Daniel Liu
 FRUIT SELLER Jade Radford

Early dramaturgy and development for THE BOOK OF WILL was by Nicholas C. Avila.

CHARACTERS

Casting should be diverse. Shakespeare is for everyone.

HENRY CONDELL—40; feisty, hopeful friend and actor in the King's Men.

JOHN HEMINGES—50; reasonable friend and financial manager of the King's Men; owner of the Globe Tap House; a good man, a gentleman, if serious.

RICHARD BURBAGE—50s; seasoned lion of the stage, famous across England, loud and proud.

(Henry, John, and Richard wear identical mourning rings for Will.)

ALICE HEMINGES—35, John's daughter and alewife, knows everyone and hangs with the boys.

BOY HAMLET—Young actor.

BARMAN—Ruffian.

BARMAN 2—Drunk.

BEN JONSON—Poet laureate of England, friend/rival of Shakespeare. Amazing drunk. A bear of a man. Surprisingly weepy.

ELIZABETH CONDELL—Henry's wife, savvy and fun.

REBECCA HEMINGES—John's wife, a good wife. Strong, busy with their grocery business, a woman who has weathered much but loves her husband and sons and God.

ED KNIGHT—"Stage manager" for the King's Men, self-serious and particular.

RALPH CRANE—Humble scrivener of the King's Men. Quick, sure, quiet.

WILLIAM JAGGARD—Successful if shady publisher of books, plays, and playbills. He is confident in his ability to get what he wants. Very experienced, very connected, willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. An ass.

ISAAC JAGGARD—William's son, will inherit the business. Sensitive, an artist at heart.

MARCUS—20, printer's apprentice at the Jaggard print shop, nosy but honest.

COMPOSITOR—Works for Jaggard, young.

EMILIA BASSANO LANIER—50, fiery Italian feminist and poet, independent woman, lover of life (and of Shakespeare).

ANNE HATHAWAY SHAKESPEARE—60, Shakespeare's now ailing wife. Strong-willed, a classy lady, a survivor.

SUSANNAH SHAKESPEARE—30, good girl and daughter of Shakespeare.

CRIER—Newsboy.

BERNARDO, FRANCISCO—Actors playing those roles.

SIR EDWARD DERING—60, book and theatre lover.

HORATIO

FRUIT SELLER

MARCELLUS

Doubling for 10 Actors

1—Henry Condell

2—John Heminges

3—Richard Burbage / William Jaggard / Horatio

4—Elizabeth Condell / Emilia Bassano Lanier / Fruit Seller / Marcellus

5—Rebecca Heminges / Anne Hathaway Shakespeare

6—Ralph Crane / Barman / Compositor / Francisco

7—Alice Heminges / Susannah Shakespeare

8—Ed Knight / Isaac Jaggard

9—Marcus / Boy Hamlet / Crier / Bernardo

10—Ben Jonson / Barman 2 / Sir Edward Dering

SETTING

1619–1623.

London and Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

LOCATIONS

John Heminges' Tap House at the Globe, John's home, Henry's home, the office and stage at the Globe, Jaggard's print shop, Emilia Bassano Lanier's house, Ben Jonson's house, Anne Shakespeare's house in Stratford.

NOTE ON PRESSES

Full moveable Elizabethan printing presses needn't be seen. It's their sound, the ink, and the multitude of paper that interest this play.

TO THE GREAT VARIETY OF READERS

It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them; and so to haue publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious imposters, that expos'd them: euen those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued them. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: and what he thought, he vttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works, and giue them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your diuers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: and if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selues, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

—John Heminges

Henry Condell

Preface to the First Folio, 1623

*“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.”*

—William Shakespeare,
As You Like It

THE BOOK OF WILL

ACT ONE

One.

1619. London, England.

The sound of millions of...pages flipping and smacking and rustling.

Or is it applause we hear?

Out of the darkness emerges one man, a young, scrawny actor playing Prince Hamlet...poorly.

He performs from the "bad quarto" version of Hamlet...

BOY HAMLET.

To be, or not to be... Aye there's the point,
To Die, to sleep, is that all? Aye all:
No, to sleep, to dream, aye marry there it goes,
For in that dream of death, when we awake,
And borne before an everlasting Judge,
From whence no passenger ever returned—

Which smacks right into...

Two.

The Globe Tap House—the comfortable haunt of our heroes and their friends.

John Heminges, Henry Condell, and Richard Burbage sit at their favorite table, drink their favorite beer—of which they've had several so far—and ridicule that poor actor. Burbage is mad as hell, the others laugh at and with him, and Alice Heminges keeps the beer coming. They are drunk, hilarious compatriots.

BURBAGE. *What in the un-muzzled dog-breath was that?* That wasn't Hamlet, that fobbing hackery, that was a defilement, I have been defiled.

ALICE. All right, Burbage.

BURBAGE. *I have been defiled.*

JOHN. It was awful, Alice.

HENRY. So very awful. I was not enough prepared for that level of mediocrity.

JOHN. And I was not enough drunk.

ALICE. I told you not to go; I said it'd make you mad.

JOHN. I heard they sold out both days.

HENRY.

BURBAGE.

ALICE.

What?!

What?!

No!

JOHN. *That's* what makes me mad.

BURBAGE. Just because that little froth can hold a skull he thinks he can play Hamlet? My soul is written into that part and I'll play The Prince till I die, and after that? They better use *my* skull for Yorick so I can spend eternity silently judging all else.

ALICE. You could've left before he boiled over.

HENRY. We did, right after Ophelia giggled his way through Act Three.

ALICE. Giggled.

HENRY.

BURBAGE.

JOHN.

Giggled.

Giggled.

Giggled.

BURBAGE. *Those pillagers of wit and charlatans of heart.*

ALICE. That's what I hate most, the thievery of it. They just steal the words.

JOHN. I wish they stole the words. They just steal the title and Will's name and make up the rest.

HENRY. Of all the piracies of Will's work this one was the worst.

ALICE. Worse than the *Two Gentlemen of Antwerp*?

JOHN.

HENRY.

BURBAGE.

The worst.

The worst.

The worst.

BURBAGE. Now? I'm going to have to kill that kid. First I'm going to kill the hack that pirated our play, then I'm going to kill the pimple that played my part, and just for shits and giggles I'm killing Ophelia too.

ALICE. Hasn't that girl been through enough?

BURBAGE. *It was blasphemy and they must be punished.*

JOHN. We shall spare you the description of Gertrude.

HENRY. The lady doth protest *so very much*, methinks. Did they not read the part where he says, "Do not saw the air too much with your hand"? Act Two.

JOHN.

BURBAGE.

Act Three.

Act Three.

HENRY. Act Three. And here the simpering thing is— (*Makes a sawing-of-air gesture.*) extricating the logs of an unseen forest.

JOHN. And yet the people pay. For rubbish!

HENRY. If I'd known that I wouldn't have worked so hard all this time.

ALICE. They pay because it says Shakespeare.

BURBAGE. That's not Shakespeare, that's shit wrapped in roses.

ALICE. I mean if they're going to steal the scripts why don't they at least steal them *correctly*?

HENRY. Because they send those damn boys, who have neither patience nor understanding, to copy the shows while we perform them.

BURBAGE. *I'll kill the boys too.*

ALICE. That's it I'm cutting you off.

BURBAGE. You do and the king'll hear of it.

ALICE. It's not the king I'm worried about, Burbage, it's your wife. Winny will have my hide if I send you back to her like this.

BURBAGE. My Winnifred, Henry's Liz, your mother, they saw us play these parts with our hearts on fire. They saw the first *Hamlet* that e'er was, they know what's lost with this pirating, what cold wind blows when mice attempt to play lions. You do too. You remember your father onstage, I know you do.

ALICE. Strutting and fretting. Yes I do.

JOHN. All right, Burbage.

HENRY. A lion indeed. That you were, John.

JOHN. That was a long time ago.

ALICE. I wish you'd play again, Dad. I really do.

JOHN. Oh stop it, all of you.

BURBAGE. We lost one of our best when you quit.

JOHN. I didn't quit. We needed a manager more than a Polonius. Now we play the palace monthly. That took more than Burbage's fame, it took fiscal sanity and you're welcome.

ALICE. We just mean you were good.

HENRY. Very good.

BURBAGE. Pretty good.

Teasing laughter—John bats it away.

ALICE. Well no matter how the mice skitter, it's *you* that play to packed houses, you the king's favorite, you who roar. You are *all* lions of the boards to this day and no hack Hamlet will change that.

HENRY. No. 'Tis we ourselves will do it. We are not young.

BURBAGE. Aye. Performances end. So do actors.

HENRY. Theatre is lived, not kept. It sleeps when we do.

JOHN. Well said, Condi. Now shut up, you're making me feel old.

BURBAGE. You are old.

HENRY. We all are.

ALICE. All right you triplets of gloom. You're none of you King Lear yet.

A joyful thought.

JOHN.
Lear!

HENRY.
Lear!

BURBAGE.
Lear!

BURBAGE. God bless *The Tragedy of King Lear*.

HENRY. The best thing I've ever seen in my life.

JOHN. The hush of the crowd—silent—

ALICE. Neither bird nor bell as Burbage leans over his Cordelia—

BURBAGE. “Look on her! Look! Her lips! Look there! Look there...”

HENRY. A flood of weeping, the whole Globe weeping. But silent.

JOHN. What a thing it was.

BURBAGE. I thought they hated it at first. “*Why aren't you wailing, groundlings? You are witness to a goddamn masterpiece.*”

ALICE. No. No they were with you every minute. They always were. Maybe not for *Titus*.

JOHN.
Titus sold well.

HENRY.
Titus!

BURBAGE. Mayhem and gore always do.

HENRY. But *Merry Wives* sold the better than all of them. Your Falstaff, John?

ALICE. Yes! Falstaff!

HENRY. The queen heard the laughs from the Globe in her bed that night.

ALICE. The people loved it. They followed you for weeks, Dad.

JOHN. “When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased.”

ALICE. Mother loved you in that one. She always loves a comedy.

BURBAGE. Wait now, his Falstaff? My Henry! My Othello!

ALICE. Let's not act that one out in the bar shall we?

BURBAGE. I will tell you right now that I was not Burbage when we played it, I *was* Othello. The blood in mine eyes—the trembling heart.

HENRY. The best time I had in any play? You're going to laugh. Being backstage for the beginning of *The Tempest*? The storm at sea?

BURBAGE. THE STORM! God I wish he wrote more storms.

ALICE. I might have rattled some pots backstage for that.

THE BOOK OF WILL

by Lauren Gunderson

7 men, 3 women

Without William Shakespeare, we wouldn't have literary masterpieces like *Romeo and Juliet*. But without Henry Condell and John Heminges, we would have lost half of Shakespeare's plays forever! After the death of their friend and mentor, the two actors are determined to compile the First Folio and preserve the words that shaped their lives. They'll just have to borrow, beg, and band together to get it done. Amidst the noise and color of Elizabethan London, *THE BOOK OF WILL* finds an unforgettable true story of love, loss, and laughter, and sheds new light on a man you may think you know.

"THE BOOK OF WILL...unequivocally announces Gunderson as a playwright with whom to be reckoned. It is, quite frankly, one of the best plays I have ever seen. It will bring tears of both laughter and sorrow to all but the most jaded audience member's eyes. It is, in a word, a triumph."

—**Boulder Weekly**

"[Gunderson] has peopled the stage with lively, historically based characters... She paints a vivid portrait of the times in language sometimes formal, sometimes poetic and often...contemporary... She also gives a real feel for theater life and what it means to be an actor; you sense this is a work of both scholarship and love. ...[THE BOOK OF WILL] serves as homage to those who sacrificed to make the first folio happen and to Shakespeare's magnificent words."

—**Westword (Denver)**

Also by Lauren Gunderson

ADA AND THE ENGINE

THE REVOLUTIONISTS

SILENT SKY

and others

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