

SHAKESPEARE  
IN THE RUINS

SPRING 2012 NEWS

**SIR** returns **HOME**  
to **The Trappist**  
Monastery Provincial  
Heritage Park and  
the restored Ruins

**HENRY V**  
May 31 - June 23

**EARLY BIRD SPECIAL!**  
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# HENRY V

## The Man, the Myth, the Legend



**This spring, I will be directing King Henry V. Near the beginning of my research, I happened upon a quote describing Henry thusly. “Depending on his mood, his eyes flashed from the mildness of a dove to the brilliance of a lion’s”. Although poetic, it explained nothing of the man himself. I was inspired, and set off to find out what I could about the real King Henry V. This is what I found.**

∞ *Richard II was deposed by Henry’s father, which put the young prince in line to the throne.*

∞ The battle depicted in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* where Henry defeats Hotspur took place when Henry was just sixteen years old.

∞ Henry was coronated at 27 years old during a snow storm.

∞ The character of Falstaff, who is portrayed as a bad influence on the young Prince Henry in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV pts. 1&2* is believed to be based on Sir John Oldcastle, who later was convicted of heresy. Despite Henry’s attempts to find a way for his old comrade to escape, the final straw came when Oldcastle planned to kidnap Henry and establish a commonwealth in place of the monarchy. The plan failed and upon his capture, Oldcastle was hanged and burnt “gallows & all”.

∞ Henry took a potentially fatal arrow to the face in battle but luckily was treated by the royal physician. He applied honey to the wound to act as an antiseptic, fashioned a tool to remove the arrow, and then flushed the wound with alcohol. Henry lived but was scarred for life.

∞ Henry promoted the use of English and it was during his reign that it was adopted as the language of record with Government.

∞ During the siege at Rouen, with the town cut off and starving, the women and children were forced out through the gates as the town believed that Henry would allow them to pass through unmolested. Henry refused to allow this and the women and children died of starvation in the ditches surrounding the town. This cast a dark shadow on the King’s reputation.



*Henry’s marriage to Catherine of Valois*

∞ He married Catherine of Valois in 1420 at the age of 34, and their only child Henry became King Henry VI of England.

∞ Henry died in 1422 at the age of 36, apparently from dysentery which he contracted during the siege of Meaux.



Upon reading the historical information, two things struck me. Henry was very young when he became King. At the age when most young men are embarking upon their career of choice, he had already amassed ten years of experience leading men into battle. Secondly, I was intrigued by the documented cases of incidences which could be considered blights on his reputation. The siege at Rouen saw him make the decision to let the women and children starve. At the Battle of Agincourt, he ordered the killing of the French prisoners.

The juxtaposition of these documented atrocities against the image of Henry as hero (which for the most part is how he is portrayed in *Henry V*) is what fascinates me. War is like that. There is no doubt that it brings all manner of patriotic emotions to the forefront, but there is a cost. To explore *Henry V* (the play) with this in mind is a prospect that I find extremely intriguing. See you on the battlefield!

# Return To The RUINS!

After ten long years, Shakespeare in the Ruins is thrilled to be returning home to the Trappist Monastery Provincial Heritage Park!

Opening May 31st 2012, we will once again take you, our adventurous audience, on a journey in and around the Monastery Ruins and into the world of *Henry V*!

We are tremendously grateful to our good friends at Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship for all of their work preventing the Ruins from becoming more 'ruined'!

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship has reinforced the existing structure of the Trappist Monastery, which over time had become increasingly hazardous for the public (and us!) to enjoy. With newly-reinforced walls, a brand new drainage system, and even lighting and power installed on-site, the Province has succeeded in restoring this wonderful attraction while maintaining the historic integrity of the site.

Beginning with this year's production of historical masterpiece *Henry V*, we look forward to a new era of presenting Shakespeare in the most scenic settings imaginable, and sharing this lovingly-restored park with all of Manitoba!

**left: Shakespeare in the Ruins in 1997  
(*Twelfth Night*)**

**below: Newly restored Ruins**



# NEXT QUESTION

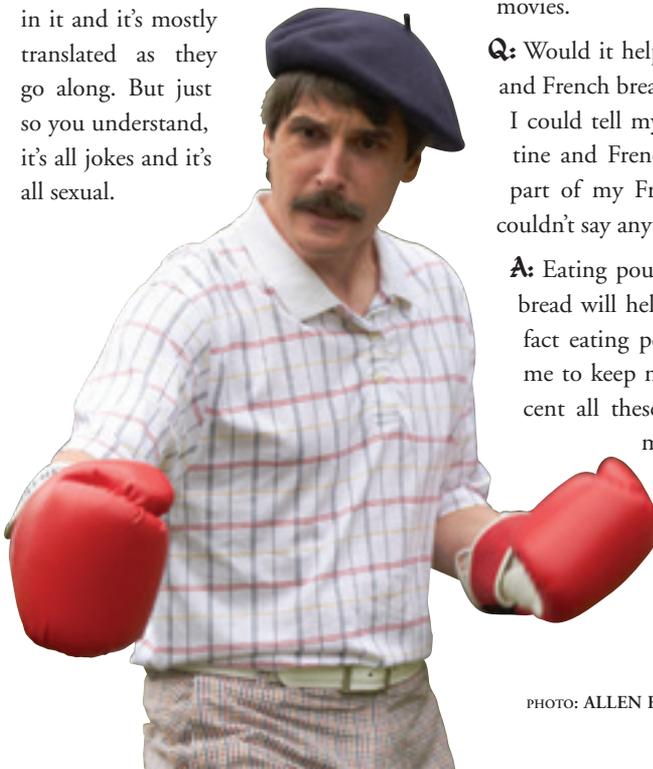
Some Questions about the French asked by G.M. Matt Moreau and answered by company member Eric Bosse

**Q:** *Henry V* is about an English King who goes to war in France because he thinks it will help his popularity back home. Do you think this story would be different if it was told from a French point of view?

**A:** Yes the story would had been quite different if the English hadn't used lowly archers from a distance to defeat -in a cowardly manner- the glorious French knights on their magnificent mounts.

**Q:** Do you think our audiences will have any trouble understanding what is going on in our production of *Henry V*, if they cannot understand French?

**A:** There isn't all that much French in it actually. The French royalty speak good English, and there's only one scene with lots of French in it and it's mostly translated as they go along. But just so you understand, it's all jokes and it's all sexual.



**Q:** I am taking French lessons to improve my conversational skills and my grammar. Do you have any tips or advice for someone learning French?

**A:** Tips for people learning French:

1. Listen to as much French as you can. Listen to the radio in your car or watch TV.
2. Be a little drunk. Alcohol lowers the inhibitions and raises the spirits.

**Q:** Would it help if I read more *Tintin* and *Asterix et Obelix*? Do you read *Bandes Desinees*? What are your favourite BD?

**A:** I have a stack. That's how I learned to read. I got through all the *Tintin*, *Asterix*, *Lucky Luke*, *Schtroumpfs* (*Smurfs*) as a kid. I love the work of Enki Bilal. You should see *Immortal*, one of his movies.

**Q:** Would it help if I ate more poutine and French bread? If you could say yes, I could tell my wife that eating poutine and French bread is an integral part of my French lessons. And she couldn't say anything. Please say yes.

**A:** Eating poutine and eating French bread will help you learn French. In fact eating poutine is what allowed me to keep my thick Quebecois accent all these years. If you want a more refined Parisian accent eating béarnaise made with butter will help.

# If you have never been to **SHAKESPEARE IN THE RUINS...**

SIR is entering its 19th season, and while it seems inconceivable that there are some who have not yet experienced the magic first-hand, for the dozen or so of you out there who do exist, we thought we would let a few of our audience members describe just what you can expect when you come to see Shakespeare in the ruins:

“Its original site at the ruins has given Manitoba audiences some of the most memorable moments in their theatre history: Puck dropping out of a tree, torches illuminating Romeo and Juliet’s crypt, Titania arriving on a barge, Lady Macbeth washing that damned spot out in the river, a lone piper playing a pibroch while lightning flashed in the distance, Canada geese accompanying the lovelorn Don Adriano in Love’s Labour’s Lost, and the climactic battle scene in Richard III. In many ways, the ruins are the perfect site to do Shakespeare.” ~ **Kevin Longfield, “From Fire to Flood”**

“I think my fondest memory of all is the Shakespeare in the Ruins production of Romeo & Juliet, out in St. Norbert, with the audience moving through the ruins, following the action...the sun set while I was there, a bird flew through the ruins, it was....sublime. And it just goes to show, I think, that intelligence and talent can still beat big bucks in marketing any day.” ~ **Jacqui Good, CBC Radio**

“Clouds drifted ominously over the opening night performance of Shakespeare in the Ruins... a spirited production of Romeo & Juliet, made memorable by the atmosphere-soaked setting of what was once a Trappist monastery. It was a novel treat to escape the cramped, stuffy theatre and wander in the open air following the actors playing out Shakespeare’s tragic tale.” ~ **Kevin Prokosh, Winnipeg Free Press**

“The blazing sun sets behind an open monastery window. Soon, torchlit shadows are dancing across the walls of the limestone ruins, the screech of a nighthawk filling the cool night air. From the impressive, somewhat spooky interior of the ruins to the lush, sprawling banks of the LaSalle River... A Midsummer Night’s Dream is, well, simply dreamy... the audience follows the actors as they snake through the ruins and the surrounding grounds, which provide the perfect setting for Shakespeare’s fanciful, often zany tale.” ~ **Riva Harrison, Winnipeg Sun**

“Les spectateurs sont assis à même la scène et assistent de très près au spectacle. La distance entre la scène et les spectateurs n’existe plus, mais la magie du théâtre, elle, s’en trouve encore plus présente.” ~ **Sylvianne Lanthier, La Liberté**

“I love what they are doing out there. I think it’s one of the most innovative ways of doing Shakespeare I’ve seen in Winnipeg for a long time.” ~ **Robert Enright, CBC Radio**

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*Following is a list of those whose generosity has helped SIR to succeed.*



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# Merry, Tragical, Tedious & Brief: *A Stripped-Down* MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

In the fall of 2011, we conducted a survey among those attending the Manitoba Association of Teachers of English Special Areas Group (MATE SAG) Conference to determine which of Shakespeare's works they would most like to see "stripped down" for their students. The most popular title (perhaps unsurprisingly) was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and so that's what SIR will be delivering for our 2012 fall high school tour, adding to our catalogue which, of course, already includes *Stripped-Down Macbeth*, *Stripped-Down Romeo & Juliet*, and *Stripped-Down Hamlet*.

What is it about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that makes it so popular among English teachers and the general public? For starters, it can be a heck of a lot of fun, constructed around three major comedic scenarios: Bottom's transformation into an ass (and Tita-

nia's subsequent infatuation with said ass); the love potion-induced collision of the four mismatched lovers; and (*the piece de resistance*), the mechanicals' play-within-a-play performance of *Pyramus & Thisby*.

In fact, the play's entire plot construction is so artfully rendered, dovetailing the various subplots of three completely distinct yet intractably interconnected worlds (the Athenian "courtiers", the mechanical thespians, and the land of the faeries), and so gracefully executed that it should prove both joyful and challenging to whomever is assigned the task of distilling the whole concoction down to the 60-minute, 4-actor format. Of course, come November, YOU can look forward to enjoying the results at our annual stripped-down public performance: expect a forecast of "hot ice, and wondrous strange snow", with a 99% chance of hilarity!

## THE CAST of *Stripped-Down Romeo & Juliet* talking to the audience after a performance at Rossbrook House



# Dear Uncle Willy

I know it's silly, but I hate one of my classmates. He has a lot of money, and is good in every sport, not to mention he always gets straight A's. It just doesn't seem fair to me. He gets dropped off in a fancy town car, and I have to walk to school and get splashed with mud. And he's always smiling. I just want to see him have something bad happen to him, so he knows what it feels like, and I can see him for once without that stupid grin. I have an idea for a prank that would make him the laughing stock of our class. It's kind of mean (it involves poop), and I hate bullies, but is it bullying if you do it to someone who has the perfect life?

- Not A Bully

DEAR NAB:

I think the king is but a man as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me. The element shows to him as it doth to me. All his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man, and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore, when he sees reason of fears as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are.

Send your questions to: [billshaky@gmail.com](mailto:billshaky@gmail.com)

## FUN FACTS



Shakespeare's works contain over 600 references to birds of all kinds, including the swan, bunting, cock, dove, robin, sparrow, nightingale, swallow, turkey, wren, starling, and thrush, just to name a few!



Macbeth is thought to be one of the most produced plays ever, with a performance beginning somewhere in the world every four hours!



Most academics agree that Shakespeare wrote his first play, Henry VI, Part One around 1589 to 1590 when he would have been roughly twenty-five years old. If you are thirteen you will think he was ancient but if you are twenty-six you will probably be thinking about where your life is going!



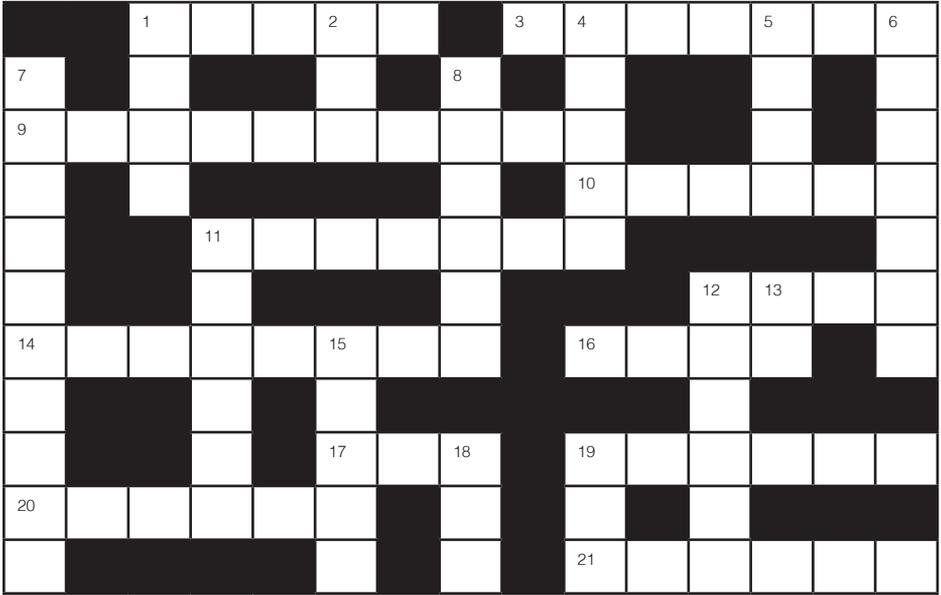
From 1788 to 1820, performances of King Lear were prohibited on the English Stage due to the insanity of the reigning monarch, King George III.

**Shakespeare's friend and fellow actor, Richard Burbage, amazed and delighted audiences with his stirring interpretation of the outrageous villain, Richard III. On March 13, 1602, a lawyer and diarist named John Manningham recorded a now-famous anecdote about Shakespeare and Richard Burbage:**

"Upon a time when Burbage played Richard the Third there was a citizen grown so far in liking with him, that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained and at his game ere Burbage came. Then, message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third."

# CHAUTAUQUA

On February 18th S.I.R. hosted its first ever fundraising Chautauqua. The event was a huge success. The evening was filled with food, drinks and entertainment (provided by some of Winnipeg's most talented performers). Thanks to everyone who attended and everyone who helped out.



## PUZZLES THE WILL DOWN

By Debbie Patterson

### ACROSS

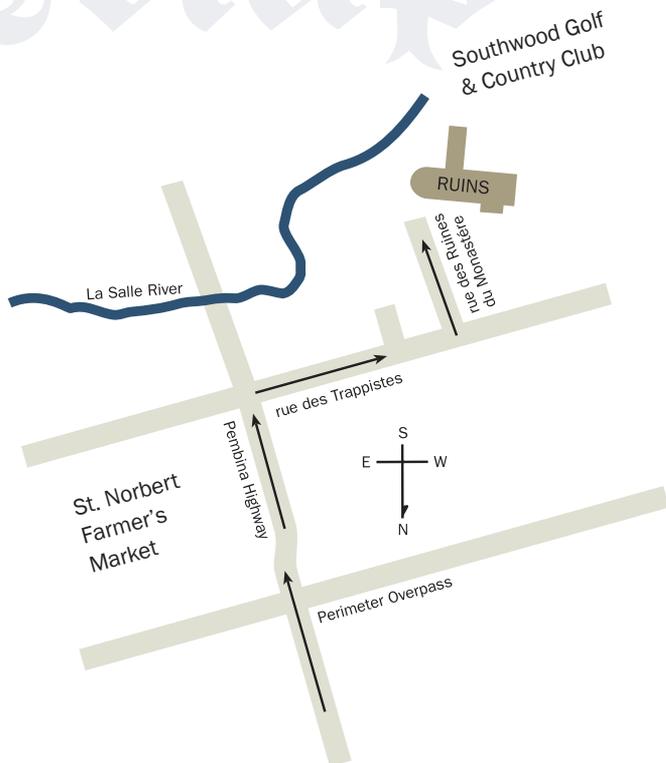
1. How Juliet needs the steeds to gallop.
- 3 & 16. "(16 across), poor Yorick! I knew him, (3 across),"
9. According to Elizabeth he's a "foul bunch-back'd toad."
10. Iago's wife.
11. Fiery Henry Percy.
12. "The bawdy \_\_\_\_ of the dial is now upon the prick of noon."
14. Designer of Henry IV.
16. With 3 across.
17. "Before" in Shakespeare.
19. Costume designer Maureen \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Great beauty of Twelfth Night.
21. "Pimp-daddy" in Shakespeare.

1. A popular comic book word invented by Shakespeare: "\_\_\_\_\_-villain".
2. Bottom's poem: "And Phibbus' \_\_\_\_/ Shall shine from far..."
4. The kind of cage the Friar fills with herbs.
5. Where Petruchio thinks the wasp wears his sting.
6. An unlikely wrestler in As You Like It.
7. Rosse calls Macbeth "Bellona's \_\_\_\_\_".
8. "No, he hath \_\_\_\_ the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens."
11. Coming soon to an SIR stage near you!
12. "Hurry" in Shakespeare.
13. "\_\_\_\_ an unperfect actor on the stage..."
15. "Some are born \_\_\_\_, some achieve \_\_\_\_ness..."
18. "A man may fish with the worm that hath \_\_\_\_ of a king..."
19. "The \_\_\_\_ of Pyramus."



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## GETTING TO THE RUINS



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