as you like it

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Resource Pack | September 2005
All the pictures fairest lined
Are but black to Rosalind
Let no face be kept in mind
But the fair of Rosalind
As You Like It was written by William Shakespeare in 1599, at the peak of his career. By this time he was a founding member, writer, actor and shareholder with ‘The Lord Chamberlain’s Men’ one of the biggest and most popular companies in London. The play was first performed at the new theatre built by Richard Burbage especially for the company, The Globe. It is thought that the plays most famous lines ‘All the world’s a stage’ refer to the new theatre. The play would have been performed many times in Shakespeare’s lifetime, including a performance for James I at Wilton House in Wiltshire. Shakespeare possibly appeared in the play himself as the old servant, Adam, although he would have been only 36 at the time.

The play is a perfect example of Shakespearean comedy with many of his trademarks – sharp-tongued fools, cross-dressing girls, a fairy tale forest, confusion, romance and a very happy ending. The play has more songs than any other comedy, an abundance of puns and wordplay and even a wrestling match, making it one of the most simply entertaining plays in the canon.
As You Like It is a dramatisation of a popular piece of prose by Thomas Lodge called Rosalynde, published around ten years before Shakespeare wrote the play, in 1590. Shakespeare used Lodge’s plot and characters, changing only a few names and events and adding the characters of Touchstone and Jaques along with a few others. He did lighten some elements to present the story as a comedy, removing the death of the wrestler and a military attack on Duke Ferdinand.

“Ganimede... began thus; Nay Forrester quoth he... seeing thou saist thou art so deeply in love, let me see how thou canst wooe: I will represent Rosalynde and thou shalt bee as thou art [Orlando]; see... how if Rosalynde were present, how thou couldst court her.” (from Rosalynde)

It was usual for Shakespeare and other dramatists of the time to use existing stories for their plays. Their audiences would have been pleased to see versions of popular tales and the craft of the playwright was in translating them into exciting, engaging and entertaining theatre.

Pastoral Romance

Both Rosalynde and As You Like It follow a literary style known as Pastoral Romance. It was originally a convention of Ancient Greek literature but was revived in the 1500s during what was known as the Renaissance.

The Renaissance – the period in history and cultural movement during which Shakespeare was writing. It began in Italy in the 14th century and continued across Europe, reaching England in the 16th century and lasting until the 17th century. The Renaissance was a revival of Classical Greek and Roman artistic and scientific work which led to a great period of learning and artistic creation. Michaelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci and Galileo were just a few of the many great artists and scientists of the Renaissance. You can see evidence of how Shakespeare was influenced by Classical Greek and Roman literature all through his plays: How many references to Gods and other mythical characters can you spot in As You Like It?

Pastoral Romances were set in the countryside and portrayed it as a romantic, idyllic place, comparing it favourably to the town. The country was shown as an escape from the corruption, immorality and pretentions of court to a simple, honest life where lessons could be learned from the good and charming folk who lived there.

Characteristics of Pastoral Romance:

Shepherds and Shepherdesses. Usually beautiful and portrayed as philosophers and lovers. Often a shepherd loved a scornful shepherdess (Sylvius and Phebe).

Forests. Peopled by outlaws, merry men and usurped rulers and full of magic and love. Robin Hood stories followed this style.

Journeys and Adventures. A young man sets off on a journey which involves a discovery or learning about the world or himself.

Disguise. Often there is a confusion over mistaken identity – very common in Shakespeare comedies.

Happy endings. Lovers always marry, wrongs are forgiven and good triumphs.
The first part of the action takes place at court, where the Duke Senior has been overthrown and banished by his brother Frederick. Senior’s daughter, Rosalind, has stayed behind to be with her beloved cousin Celia, while the old Duke has gone into exile in the Forest of Arden with his followers.

The play begins with Orlando, the youngest of three sons whose father has died, at odds with his eldest brother, Oliver, who keeps him at home, unschooled. Orlando is due to fight the Duke’s wrestler and Oliver tells the wrestler that Orlando has an evil nature to make sure he is badly hurt. However, Orlando wins the wrestling match and impresses Rosalind, who falls in love with him – he is similarly affected. Unexpectedly, however, Rosalind is banished by the Duke. Celia insists on leaving with her for Arden, to find Rosalind’s father. To make sure they are safe, they will disguise themselves – Rosalind as a young man, called Ganymede, and Celia as his sister, Aliena – and take Touchstone, the court fool, with them too. Orlando also arrives home to threatening news, that Oliver is plotting to kill him. He too leaves for Arden, taking with him his father’s old manservant, Adam.

In the Forest of Arden, Duke Senior and his courtiers, including the melancholy Jaques, are adapting to the rural life. When Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone arrive, still not knowing where the Duke is, they buy a house and some land and begin to settle in too. Orlando is the last to arrive with Adam, who is starving and exhausted. Orlando bursts in to a meal that the Duke is about to eat and demands to be fed – he is welcomed and he and Adam join the Duke’s entourage.

Later. Orlando has been going through the forest, hanging love poems to Rosalind on the trees. She finds the poems and is delighted to discover that they are Orlando’s work. She approaches him as Ganymede and cheekily suggests that he is not really in love. When he insists he is, she says he should woo her as if she were Rosalind, to cure him.

INTERVAL

Another lover, Touchstone, woos a goatherd, Audrey, with wit which is lost on her. Rosalind and Celia watch a third pair of lovers, Sylvius, a shepherd and Phebe. Sylvius loves and woos Phebe but she aggressively shuns him. Shocked, Rosalind scolds Phebe and abuses her in return, which only causes Phebe to fall in love with the ‘young man’. She sends Sylvius with a letter to Ganymede, disguised as a ‘taunting letter’.

Orlando continues to woo Rosalind as Ganymede as Rosalind. She teases him by behaving erratically, moving from anger to love to a mock marriage before warning him of the fickle moods of women. While Orlando is hunting, Sylvius brings Phebe’s love letter to Rosalind who angrily sends him away. Unexpectedly, Oliver enters with a bloody handkerchief from Orlando. He tells Rosalind and Celia that he came in to the forest to capture Orlando on the Duke’s orders but instead Orlando had saved him from being attacked by a lion and they were reconciled.

Oliver and Celia (as Aliena) have fallen in love at first sight and are to be married the next day. Rosalind tells Orlando that if he wishes, she can make Rosalind appear and he can marry also. When Sylvius and Phebe enter, she further says that she will marry Phebe (if she is a man) and that Sylvius too will be married and orders them all to meet the following day. In the final scene, Rosalind reveals herself and is reunited with her father and Orlando. Phebe realises her mistake. Four sets of lovers can now be married: Rosalind and Orlando, Oliver and Celia, Phebe and Sylvius and Touchstone and Audrey. Finally, Oliver and Orlando’s brother Jaques de Boyes enters and announces that the Duke Frederick has converted to religion, giving back the Dukedom to the banished Duke Senior. Senior proposes a return to court and to the previous status quo – with Orlando as his heir.
two worlds apart

In As You Like It, the two worlds of court and Arden could not be more different. An element of the genre of Pastoral Romance is the emphasis of the difference of these worlds to show the moral superiority of the country, which Shakespeare has used. The difference in atmosphere of the two settings is immediately apparent even to a modern audience.

**The Atmosphere of Town**

**Oppressive.** Orlando, Rosalind and Celia are all controlled by older, male figures who treat them badly. Duke Frederick rules his court with force and aggression with no compassion for even his own daughter.

**Violent.** The wrestling match sets this atmosphere where there is a great danger that Orlando could be killed. Duke Ferdinand wants Orlando brought to him 'dead or living' and even tries to invade the Forest with an army.

**Pretentious/Shallow.** This is represented by the figure of Le Beau who speaks with an affected accent, puts on airs and describes the dangerous violence of the wrestling as 'good sport'.

**The Atmosphere of Country**

**Free.** In the forest there are no rules to live by. Although the Duke Senior is still treated with authority, he does not give orders to be followed. The norms of society are turned upside down, with Rosalind dressing as a woman, courtiers marrying country girls and women wooing men; no-one feels the constraints of 'proper' behaviour.

**Creative.** In the forest, poetry is written, songs are sung, letters are composed and long speeches commenting on the world are made.

**Romantic.** Four sets of lovers, the most in any Shakespeare play, spend their days romancing each other.

**Honest.** The country folk, when engaged in witty conversation with those from court, answer plainly and simply in return, often undermining the puns of the courtiers.

In the Lyceum's production, Mark Thomson, the director, is very keen to play on this huge shift in atmosphere from the court to the country. Part of the way he has done this is through set – you can see how on the following page. Another way he has emphasised this is with a change of scene order. Mark shifted the scenes around so that all the scenes at court are together at the beginning and then the action moves and remains in Arden, as below:

**In the Court of Duke Frederick**
- Act 1 as written
- Act 2 Scene 2
- Act 2 Scene 3
- Act 3 Scene 1
- Act 2 Scene 1

**In the Forest of Arden**
- Act 2 Scene 4 - 7
- Act 3 Scene 2 - 5
- Act 4 as written
- Act 5 as written
Designer Greg Smith has created both the sets and costumes for this production. Here he talks through his concept for the design.

Set

“The design requirements of As You Like It are very simple: a court and a forest and so the design is very simple.

The court as described by Shakespeare through his play is a dangerous and uncomfortable place. The forest, in contrast to this, is a place where people can be themselves and enjoy love. So, I decided on a very simple design device. The court would be dark, glamorous, sharp and square. The forest would be light and soft with no sharp corners.

The court is a very formal place, and so the regularity of squares and grids seemed to be appropriate. They give a man made, unnatural space. In contrast, I have used circles as a motif for the forest as they are eternal and have no sharpness, soft yet strong.

A forest is always in motion. The trees move and the light is constantly changing. There are millions of leaves in a forest; it would be impossible to recreate that realistically, and so I decided to create a feeling of a forest through texture and light, using different surfaces to catch the light and textures that the light could shine onto or through, reflect from and be absorbed by, just as it is in a real forest.

I have discussed these ideas with Davey Cunningham, the lighting designer, and have hopefully provided him with enough suggestions and the means with which he can create the kind of light that will evoke the feeling of the forest.”

Costume

“The costumes for the play will also reflect these same ideas. The costumes will be contemporary and the clothes for the court will be dark and formal, while those of the forest will be light and more informal, free and more comfortable. The most difficult costume, as ever with this play will be how to make Rosalind look convincingly like a man. Perhaps we will succeed, or perhaps it will not matter if we do not, as the idea of her as a man is a conceit that we all already understand.

There is one exception to the contemporary clothing, the god Hymen. Shakespeare describes the entrance of this character as “A Masquer dressed as Hymen”; therefore this is definitely someone in a costume, not just clothes. So I have designed a costume which is definitely not clothes, and gives the feeling of a being from another place who will radiate light, just as a god should do. The two worlds of the glamorous but dangerous court and the peaceful forest come together and are joined and blessed by the god in this one costume.”
characters

As with Shakespeare’s stories, his characters are usually versions of already existing characters or character archetypes (types of characters specific to certain genres of writing). The characters in As You Like It are a combination of existing characters from the story Shakespeare adapted, stock comedy characters, and stock characters from the genre of Pastoral Romance. Also note that the simple people living in the Forest are named after Greek and Roman gods or characters, elevating them to high status [Phebe, Corin, Sylvius – also Ganymede and Aliena].

**Rosalind**: Rosalind is the daughter of the banished Duke Senior, who has remained behind at court to be with her dear friend and cousin, Celia. Rosalind is a beautiful and kind heroine, but more unusually in Shakespeare is also brave, intelligent, witty and the central character in the play. At court she behaves as court women do, exchanging witticisms with lords and ladies, attending court entertainments. But when she is banished and dresses as a boy, Ganymede, to protect herself, she takes on more masculine behaviour – she buys land, she manipulates Orlando, she chastises Phebe and she brings about the final marriage scene. Within her disguise though, she still displays feminine traits – is sad when Orlando is late to visit her, faints when she hears he is wounded. [See p.9 for more discussion]

**Adam**: The older servant of Orlando who accompanies him to the forest. He is loyal, kind and generous, giving his life savings to Orlando for the journey.

**Orlando**: The youngest son of the deceased Sir Rowland de Boys. His brother, who should have supported him, has refused to educate him and has not given him any of the opportunities that a young man entering society should have. Despite this, Orlando has become an intelligent, kind and good person. We see him caring for the elderly Adam, exchanging witticisms with Jaques, and immediately forgiving his brother when he repents. His character is in the mould of a young hero; brave, strong and passionate. He defeats the wrestler, bursts in on the Duke Senior’s feast and saves his brother from death by a lion. When he first falls in love with Rosalind he idolises her, putting her on a pedestal and worshipping her. It is only through his relationship with Rosalind as Ganymede that he learns to love her as a person rather than as an image.

**Oliver**: The eldest brother of Orlando, Oliver conspires to have him killed by the wrestler and then follows him in to the forest to bring him back, dead or alive, on Duke Frederick’s orders. When he is saved from a lion by Orlando, they are reconciled and Oliver instead becomes cast as a lover, falling for Celia (as Aliena) at first sight and prepared to give the inheritance to Orlando and live in the forest. This reinforces the harmony in the Forest of Arden that can transform him from bad to good.

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**Celia**: Celia is the daughter of Duke Frederick and cousin to Rosalind. She is devoted to her cousin and insists on going with her to Arden when she is banished. She is disguised too as Aliena, a simple country girl. Celia is also a witty and strong willed person and challenges her cousin on her love for Orlando. She joins the lovers when she falls for Oliver and is married to him the following day.

**Touchstone**: Touchstone is the fool at the court of Duke Frederick. He accompanies Celia and Rosalind in to the forest, where although not too impressed with the country life, he falls in love with a shepherdess. Touchstone is a character specifically written to entertain an audience, exchanging puns and witticisms with many characters on stage which act as comic interludes to the main story and singing several songs. [see p.8 for more discussion]

**Duke Frederick**: The Duke has recently overthrown and banished his brother. He is kind and fair ruler and remains so when banished by his brother to the Forest of Arden, looking after his followers and welcoming strangers such as Orlando and Adam. He is content with his life in Arden, hunting and living simply, but is quick to return to town when given the opportunity.

**Jaques**: Jaques is a Lord, a follower of Duke Senior who has accompanied him into exile in Arden. Like Touchstone, Jaques has little to do with the main story of the play but instead remains as an observer, who comments on what he sees around him. He is a melancholic, looking at the world through cynical and judgemental eyes and his comments are clever, witty and often amusing. At the end of the play, he decides not to return to court but to take up a solitary religious life. [see p8 for more discussion]

**Corin**: Corin is a shepherd who lives in Arden. He meets Rosalind and Celia when they arrive and arranges for them to buy a house and land from his master. An honest character, he acts as an example of the kind of simple, good people who live the rural life.

**Sylvius**: A young shepherd who woos the cruel Phebe. He is blindly in love and allows her to treat him very badly. He finally gets his reward when Phebe marries him instead of ‘Ganymede’.

**Phebe**: Phebe is the cruel shepherdess who spurns Sylvius. She falls in love with ‘Ganymede’, thinking she is a boy and rejects Sylvius in favour of him.

**Audrey**: Audrey is another shepherdess who Touchstone falls in love with. She is simple and no match for the wit of Touchstone.

**Amiens**: A Lord attending Duke Senior.

**Le Beau**: A courtier attending Duke Frederick – affected and vain.

**Charles**: The wrestler.

**Jaques de Boys**: The brother of Orlando and Oliver.

**Sir Oliver Martext**: An incompetent country priest.

**Williams**: A young man from the country, in love with Audrey.

**Hymen**: The Greek God of marriage who marries the couples in the final scene.
as you like it
Royal Lyceum Theatre Company 17 September – 15 October 2005

cast
Rosalind
Celia
Audrey
Phebe
Le Beau/Amiens
Orlando
Touchstone
Jacques
Corin/Jaques de Boys/Lord at Court
Oliver
Adam/Sir Oliver Martext
Duke Frederick/Duke Senior
Charles/Lord of Arden/William/Hymen
Silvius/Lord at Court
Emma Cunniffe
Eilidh Macdonald
Fiona Steele
Julie Duncanson
Richard Conlon
Donald Pirie
Robin Laing
John Bett
Malcolm Shields
John Jack
Thanе Bettany
Benny Young
Benedict Relton
James Mackenzie

company
Director
Designer
Lighting designer
Movement director
Music
Assistant Director
ASM on the book
Mark Thomson
Gregory Smith
Davey Cunningham
Malcolm Shields
Mark Thomson
Colin Bradie
Clare Williamson
As well as using characters from the story *Rosalynde*, Shakespeare also added characters that he knew his audiences would be entertained by. The stock characters of the fool and the malcontent were well known by audiences at the time and Shakespeare uses them both in *As You Like It*.

**Touchstone – Shakespearean Fool**

In Shakespeare’s time, fools were often employed by royalty and nobles, including Queen Elizabeth I. As well as singing, dancing and joking to entertain the family and their guests, fools would comment on what happened in the household and especially on the behaviour of the people. They were witty and intelligent rather than simply silly or funny and were allowed to criticise the behaviour of their employers without being punished.

Shakespeare regularly wrote the character of a fool into his plays. Part of the reason for doing this was to entertain his audiences with their jokes and songs. But another reason was that these ‘allowed fools’ criticised behaviour and gave a perfect opportunity to criticise the characters in the play. Touchstone is a good example of both of these types of fools. He sings and is the target of many laughs as he woos the ‘foul’ Audrey. But he also makes a joke of Orlando’s poor verses to Rosalind and has quick, clever and witty exchanges with Corin and Jaques.

Touchstone was a part written especially for an actor called Robert Armin who had joined the company in the previous year. From this point on, the fools Shakespeare wrote became wise and sharp-tongued and often heavily critical of the play’s main characters (as in King Lear), to suit the clever and witty Armin.

**Jaques – Shakespearean Malcontent**

The character of Jaques in *As You Like It* is what was known as a melancholic or malcontent. In Shakespeare’s time, people thought that human behaviour and personality was dependant on four ‘humours’:

- **blood** - bravery
- **phlegm** - calmness
- **yellow bile** - anger
- **black bile** - melancholy

A balanced person would have the humours present in their body in equal quantities. But if one became dominant, the person would take on that behaviour.

Jaques is a perfect example of a person suffering from an excess of melancholy. The melancholy man, or malcontent, had become a common figure in theatre at the time. Not simply a miserable or depressed person, the malcontent was a cynical and detached observer who made astute comments about the world as he saw it. Hamlet is Shakespeare’s most famous malcontent.

The character of Jaques makes audiences laugh and think. He can be very witty, and his melancholy state is humorous too. He says himself that he would like to be a fool, to have the licence to be critical - ‘O that I were a fool! I am ambitious for a motley coat’ (II.vii.62-3) But when he delivers the famous speech – ‘All the world’s a stage...’; his wit makes an audience contemplate life in a harsh but realistic way, as he does.
As You Like It is one of several Shakespeare plays which involve a woman disguising herself as a young man. Portia in The Merchant of Venice, Viola in Twelfth Night, Julia in Two Gentleman of Verona, Imogen in Cymbeline, Helena in All’s Well That Ends Well – all these female characters use this disguise to meet their needs.

Shakespeare’s Theatre

Shakespeare wrote very few large parts for women in his plays. To understand why, we need to know about society and theatre at the time.

- When Shakespeare was writing his plays, women were not allowed to be actors. Women’s parts had to be taken by young men from the company whose voices had not yet broken. People in the audience would be very aware that these ‘women’ were in fact men.

- These young men were less experienced actors and therefore less skilled. They could not play a large part as well as an older actor, so the women’s parts they played tended to be smaller and less complex.

In society at the time, women were seen as inferior to men. They were uneducated, had no legal rights and some members of the church even taught that they had weaker minds. Stories involving women were not perceived to be as weighty or important as men’s stories and few plays, poems or stories had a woman as their central character.

“Women in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man.” John Knox

But, because comedies dealt with less serious matters than tragedies, Shakespeare often took the opportunity to write bigger and more complex parts for his ‘women’ actors. Rosalind in As You Like It is one of these characters.

Rosalind

Rosalind is Shakespeare’s biggest part for a woman. With more lines than any other character in the play and more than either Macbeth or Prospero (in The Tempest), Rosalind can definitely be seen as the lead role in As You Like It.

Shakespeare made his lead a strong character. She is intelligent and witty, shown in her clever punning and wordplay. She is independent, surviving in Arden with no male support. And she is powerful too; she buys land, she manipulates Orlando and enables her own marriage along with that of Phebe and Sylvius. She could be seen as the most ‘feminist’ of Shakespeare’s women.

However, it is important to remember that Rosalind is only given power in Arden, a tospyturvy word where the norms of society are forgotten. At court she is at the whim of her Uncle, who banishes her when he finds her threatening.

Also, she spends most of the play dressed as a man and it is her disguise that gives her power and status. When she becomes a woman again at the end of the play, she speaks very little and submissively (Act V, Sc iv). Shakespeare writes similar parts for Portia – who can only save her husband from death disguised as a man, and Viola, who uses her disguise to protect her weakness in a foreign society.
Gender

When critics discuss *As You Like It*, they often talk about the role of Rosalind in terms of ‘gender’. A gender study involves questions of masculinity and femininity, how they are represented on stage and how the audience would receive these messages. What makes this issue more confusing when we look at this play is the confusion between Rosalind and Ganymede.

The sections that are most interesting and confusing to look in terms of gender are when Orlando is wooing Rosalind played by Ganymede, played by Rosalind. A very important question that directors and actors in modern productions have to decide is how does he react to and feel about her.

- Does he manage to forget that she is a boy and woo her as a woman?
- Does he always have in his mind that she is a boy and love her anyway?
- Does he always have in his mind that she is a boy and this stops him from wooing her seriously?
- Or does he see through the disguise and know that he is actually wooing a real woman?

This is something that has to be decided upon and played out clearly by the actors in the play.

Yet more confusion comes in when we remember that in Shakespeare’s theatre, Rosalind would be played by a young man. So Shakespearean audiences would see a young man playing a woman, disguised as a boy, imitating a woman. What would the audiences be understanding?

It is possible that Shakespeare’s audiences would have found the sight of a boy playing Rosalind so normal that they would have been able to suspend their disbelief. In plays like *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the actors would have been taken very seriously as women characters. But, the fact that Shakespeare wrote several parts for women disguised as boys suggests that the audiences would have remained aware that the person they were watching was a boy not a woman. Much of the humour of the situations these disguised ‘women’ find themselves in was heightened by the fact that the actors were boys.

There is another idea that Shakespeare was not expecting his audiences to simply laugh at the idea of a boy in drag but also find it sexually titillating. Shakespeare, as other writers of his day, often played with the idea of older men being in love with young men. There is a suggestion that he was a homosexual or that he was following a convention of writing about love between men, begun in Classical Greece and revived in the Renaissance.
Famous Rosalinds

Rosalind is the longest part Shakespeare wrote for a woman and as a result has attracted the greatest actresses (and actors) of each generation.

Peg Woffington

Women were allowed on the stage again in the mid 17th century and from the 18th century, it became fashionable for women to play men’s roles. These were known as ‘breeches parts’, because of the novelty of seeing a woman wearing a pair of men’s tight fitting trousers, or breeches. Peg Woffington was one of the most famous actresses to play breeches roles and in October 1741 she played Rosalind at Covent Garden, continuing to play the role until 1757. Her last performance ever was as Rosalind: she collapsed during the epilogue after which she retired from the stage.

Lillie Langtry

In 1890, Rosalind was played by Lillie Langtry at the St James’s Theatre, London. Originally a society beauty and mistress to the Prince of Wales, she took up acting after meeting the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt. Her performance was greatly acclaimed and crowds flocked to see her. However, it was not her performance that drew them but the opportunity to see this famous woman in a ‘breeches’ part, showing her legs, which the restrictive fashions of the day would not normally allow. The boy’s costume emphasised her femininity by showing her shapely body, rather than disguising the fact she is a woman, as in the story.

Vanessa Redgrave

In 1961, Vanessa Redgrave played Rosalind at the RSC. In this production, the attempt was to give Rosalind a real air of boyishness. Now women in trousers was neither unusual nor titillating, women could drop the pantomime style of the breeches part and produce a more truthful and feminist Rosalind. Bernard Levin wrote: ‘The naturalness of her playing, the passionate, breathless conviction of it, the depth of feeling and the breadth of reality – this is not acting at all, but living, being, loving.’

Adrian Lester

In 1991, Cheek by Jowl Theatre Company produced an all male version of As You Like It, with actor Adrian Lester as Rosalind. With an empty stage, doubling of parts and this all male casting, the company were in part returning to a more authentic staging of Shakespeare. ‘The extraordinary thing about Adrian Lester was that, with his beautiful voice and grace of movement, when he played… at Rosalind playing Ganymede playing Rosalind, one simply gave up trying to work out in one’s mind whether one thought he was a woman playing a man playing a woman or a man playing a woman playing a man playing a woman… For much of the time the audience was held so spellbound by the strength and the wit and the pain of Rosalind that the actor’s gender was forgotten.’ [Jonathon Bate]
Emma Cunniffe talks about playing Rosalind, Shakespeare's largest part for a woman.

What attracted you to the part of Rosalind?
I studied As You Like It at school and fell in love with it. When I found out about the audition and went back to it, I saw much more in it. It's such a rich play. It works on so many different levels and it's a joy as a performer to have all sorts of different places to go to. You can't turn down the challenge of playing such a big role in Shakespeare. Rosalind is such an intelligent, bright, brilliant character but she's also quite sweet and naive in a lot of ways. She's on a journey of discovering things about herself and discovering the world and that's really exciting to play.

Are you always conscious of showing Rosalind underneath Ganymede or do you really try and hide her?
I think there is a danger with a character like Rosalind who is very bright and very articulate, very instinctive and very intuitive that she can be seen to be quite pre-meditated, confident and assured. But she's just a young girl who's thinking on her feet. If you just play the truth of that, there are moments when you're going to see that she's really struggling and moments when she loses herself completely, forgets that she's pretending and actually feels like she is a boy.

What physical changes do you use to show Rosalind as Ganymede?
You can do obvious things like the voice drop – the first time she goes to speak she forgets she needs to drop her voice. I've been looking quite a lot at how men move and they do have different stances. I've been making my movements more pronounced, tougher, a bit edgier. What's interesting is that she's playing up the boy a lot of the time and then she forgets about it and becomes girly again.

She's really playing a version of herself but it's a version that she hasn't had a chance to express because she's been in such a restrained, restricted atmosphere in the court. It gives her confidence and allows her to be bolder than she's been and perhaps would be normally. A lot of the scenes between her and Celia are quite girly and the way she falls in love is so heady and off in the clouds. Being a boy earths her again and makes her look at the way women behave; she sees herself and can find humour in that. And she can challenge Orlando more than she would be able to if she was just being Rosalind.

Do you think that Orlando ever suspects that she's a girl when she's dressed as Ganymede?
There's lots of different ways it can be played. The way we're playing it and I actually think it is the way its written is that he never really knows and is just amazed at the end when he realises. I think because he hasn't got to speak to Rosalind very much at court, and she does look very different (we haven't got all of that put in place yet but hopefully I will look very different) then it will be plausible that he wouldn't recognise her. Because everything in Arden is slightly unbelievable and magical, I think it could happen. It's a shame in a way if he does know because it then just undermines the game.

What particular challenges do you find with the verse speaking?
You have to keep looking back to the rhythm on the page, how the lines are laid out and then there are so many clues as to how to play it. This is the third Shakespeare play that I've done and I'm learning that if you honour the rhythm and trust the shape of it then it helps you. You could generalise and play the emotion, you could have all the intentions there but if you're not getting the words... The words do so much; you can't just throw that away, or paraphrase it or add in bits. I used to try and be naturalistic but it's like one long poem in a way. You can say it naturalistically but it falls flat somehow, it just doesn't work.

What I love about this play is that it flips between prose and verse. Shakespeare's being quite experimental. The shepherds use the verse; Sylvius's love stuff is very simple, beautiful and heightenened and then you get prose cutting in to that – it's like the contrast between court and the forest, the two worlds.

That move from the court to the forest, does that feel like a big change for you?
Definitely. There's so much anger and frenetic energy in the court and then you get in to Arden and everyone has more time to think and speak. The lines and dialogue in the court scenes are more thoughtful and formal and quick, snappy.

The energy in the court is very masculine. I think that's part of the reason why Rosalind decides 'well maybe I should be a man' because she feels like she's being suffocated in this man's world as a woman. Being a man she can fight back and she gets the strength to brave the world.

What have rehearsals been like?
They've been really interesting. In the first two weeks we did this exercise where we all sat round in a circle and we would get up and do the scenes and try anything. Nothing could go wrong – you could sit down for a line, stand up, touch your toes, do whatever you wanted. That way you could just key in to what the shape and the mood of the scene was without having to think 'I've got to stand here' and that was really freeing.

One of other things Mark [Thomson, the director] wanted was for us to be off the book by the third week of rehearsals. Although it is hard to learn the lines so fast, it reaps rewards later on because the longer you have without the script in your hand, the more you can play and the more you can get comfortable. Now we're at the point where we're just trying to run each act and pull it apart and put it back together again. It's been a really good process for me because it's built up gradually. There's no sense of panic.

What are you most looking forward to about the performance?
It's funny because you have your opening night and all the reviewers come and it's always ironic to me that the play then goes on such a massive journey. It's not like you have the final finished product on that night, it will keep moving and shifting. It'll be interesting to see what the laughter does to it. We're doing it in the rehearsal room and no-one's responding and in the theatre, you've got 650 people laughing - that's going to bring something. Because the audience are as much a part of the show as the actors – I know it’s a cliché but it’s true.
Colin Bradie, the Lyceum Youth Theatre Leader, spent three weeks as assistant director in rehearsal with As You Like It. Here he describes the process that cast and crew go through in the first stages of rehearsal.

Read Through

For the As You Like It company, rehearsals began on day one with an informal introduction to the staff of the Lyceum by way of coffee, pastries and a welcome speech from Director, Mark Thomson. It was then into the rehearsal space for a viewing of the box model of the set and an explanation of the design concept. The actors need to see the set model as they will not tread on the real set until around week four of rehearsals, relying instead on a two dimensional taped ‘mark-up’ on the floor of the rehearsal studio to indicate where the set will be. Entrances and exits were studied along with raised areas of the stage, sight lines and in the case of this production, trap doors.

Mark then talked about his thoughts and feelings about the play, expressing his ideas on how he intended to approach the text and the rehearsal process over the next four weeks through into production. With a clearer idea of his approach and his style of working, the cast sat to read through the play, an essential opening of any rehearsal process. The read through has many purposes, most notably to allow the play to be heard by the full company for the first time. The read through also allows the actors to try out initial character ideas and get familiar with each other while allowing Mark to see if the minor cuts he has made to the text work. It is also attended by all the production staff so that they have can get familiar with the play that they will be constructing the set for, costuming, propping, lighting, sound designing and cueing over the next eight weeks.

Units

With the read through complete, Mark divided the play into 33 units. Each unit marked the beginning and the end of a large speech or section of dialogue but not necessarily the beginning and the end of a scene or act. With some scenes in the play over 10 pages long, breaking the play into smaller units was essential to allow a more detailed focus in rehearsal.

Example: the first few units the cast used
1a I.1 1-79  Brotherly Love
1b I.1 80 - 161  A Cunning Plan
1c I.1i 1-138  Kissing Cousins & Rib Breaking
1d I.1i 140 - 278  Ping!
1e I.1ii 1 - 87  Parents – oh!
1f I.1ii 88 - 136  Girl power
1g II.i  Escape from court

‘Translating’ the text

Over the next two days the company worked through the play unit by unit, putting the Shakespearean text into their own words. This process allowed the actors to strip away the Elizabethan language and get to the bare bones of what Shakespeare’s characters are saying.

Elizabethan audiences were more literal and less visual than we are today. In Shakespeare’s theatre actors tell the audience their inner thoughts and intentions as well as using fantastic verse to express emotion and set scenes. Shakespeare uses a lot of text to express something which will often have a simple meaning, something that in contemporary theatre would be expressed in one or two lines. By finding the basic meaning behind the lines the actors can return to the words of Shakespeare with a greater understanding of what’s being said and why.
This process also exposed the more difficult elements of the language and Mark and the actors explored and debated what these meant. A general discussion at the end of each unit allowed Mark to note possible ideas to engage with during the blocking process over the next couple of weeks.

**The Circle**

On day three the actors got on to their feet for an exercise called ‘the circle’. The cast formed a circle and unit by unit the actors came in to the space with scripts in hands. They were given the freedom to perform their unit in anyway they, or Mark, felt would help them to understand their character’s motivations. This simple exercise provided an arena for the actors to play with ideas, get comfortable with each other and to safely make mistakes. Each unit was performed twice, often in two very different ways and the results were then discussed by the group. This exercise took three days and provided Mark and the actors with some essential background information and ideas to take into the blocking process.

**Blocking**

With the basic blocking set, a call sheet (a sheet which tells the actors when they are needed for rehearsal) was devised by Mark and stage management based on the units and the rehearsal moved into the Lyceum’s main rehearsal studio to begin the blocking process. Blocking is the process in which Mark sets the story and traffic of the play on to the stage. He uses the ideas from the previous exploration work, the full scale mark-up of the set on the studio floor, rehearsal furniture and props to help him make choices about where actors enter, where and how they move on stage, how they say their lines, what props they use and the underlying meaning of each scene. Blocking is always an ongoing creative process and nothing is ever set in stone until the play is run through for the first time. Mark encourages a very open floor during the blocking process and the actors are continually free to feed in their ideas.

The blocking process lasted for around nine days with anything up to three hours being spent on one unit. Mark and the actors explored many different ways of approaching things to ensure that the best choices were made. It is also at this stage that the actors were coming off the book (learning their lines and rehearsing without scripts) so that they were freer to play their character.

Mark had the added responsibility during this process of keeping an eye on the production as a whole, making sure entrances and exits were practical and that the play was flowing well as a whole piece of theatre. He also was beginning to think about how the lighting would dictate areas, pick out individual moments and emphasise the drama of play. This is information he will feed to the Lighting Designer during the many Production Meetings that take place during the rehearsal process.

With the basic block set and worked through unit by unit a second time the play was now ready, three weeks into the process, for its first run through. There will still be another week in the rehearsal room and a week onstage before the performance is ready to be seen by an audience. Still a lot of work to do.
In Shakespeare’s theatre, the drama of the play was not created through set, stage effects or other elements of a visual language that we use so much today. Shakespeare used language to set scenes, create atmosphere and engage his audience. *As You Like It* is a play where the plot is less important than the language. The plot is relatively simple and the entertainment mostly comes from the exchanges and speeches.

**Verse and Prose**
Shakespeare mostly wrote using a form known as blank verse, unrhymed lines written in iambic pentameter, a convention that was usual in drama and poetry at the time.

**Iambic Pentameter:** the metre (or rhythm) of blank verse. Lines are made of five sections. Each section is made up of one unstressed followed by one stressed syllable (as in the word ‘alas’)

*Hang there/my verse/ in wit/ness of/ my love*

In *As You Like It* he does use blank verse but not all the way through. Over half of the play is written in prose, which has no form, like natural speech.

Normally in Shakespeare plays, blank verse is used by more noble characters and prose by comic or lower status characters. Blank verse is more suited to serious situations and prose, to comic. But in this play, country folk, courtiers, clowns and lovers all alternate between blank verse and prose speech. The barriers between the classes are brought down in the freedom of the Forest of Arden.

**Other Types of Verse**
There are other verse forms used in this play. The songs, Orlando’s poems and Phebe’s letter are all written in different kinds of verse. These many poetic forms create a kind of richness for the ear as an audience hears many different rhythms, shapes and rhyming structures. It is another way that Shakespeare makes the play entertaining for his audience. It also highlights the creativity of Arden and also the freedom that allows the characters the time and space to create.

**Songs**
*As You Like It* contains seven songs, sung by lords, clowns and other minor characters – as in all Shakespeare plays, no major characters sing. In this production, the music for the songs has been written by the director, Mark Thomson and recorded in the sound studio with the actors singing live over the track.

Shakespeare often used popular contemporary songs in his plays – ‘It Was a Lover and his Lass’ was one, written by composer Thomas Morley. Some of the lyrics to songs would have been written by him – it is not known which. Shakespeare used songs to provide a full, entertaining experience for his audience, as music in theatre was very popular at the time.

The songs also enhance the pastoral feel of the play and use images of rural life that emphasise the harmony, romance and creativity in the forest.
Imagery

Imagery is the way that language is used to create mental pictures which help enhance meaning. The way Shakespeare uses imagery draws audiences, actors and students to his work as it makes his drama rich and vibrant.

• Celia to Touchstone, after he makes an ironic comment:
  ‘that was laid on with a trowel’
  (likening it to laying cement in bricklaying)

• Duke Senior: ‘the icy fang… of the winter’s wind’

• Jaques: ‘I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs’

• Rosalind: ‘…here in the skirts of the forest, like fringe upon a petticoat’

We can see him employing metaphors and similes in these examples to create vivid pictures in our minds.

Puns and wordplay

As You Like It is a play which is littered with puns and full of witty exchanges.

PUN: a play on the meaning or sound of a word to make a joke, e.g. On hearing that Orlando is dressed as a hunter, Rosalind says:
  ‘He comes to kill my heart’ (hart = female deer)

Wordplay uses puns and witty observations to create humour in longer exchanges. The character of Touchstone constantly engages in wordplay – with Rosalind and Celia on his first entrance, with Corin the shepherd on a discussion of court life verses coutry life and with his lover Audrey, although most of it is lost on her. The most extended piece of wordplay is between Orlando and Rosalind as he woos her dressed as Ganymede (IV.i) Although there is humour simply in the situation, it is the quick and clever repartee between them that makes this a humorous scene.

Much punning and wordplay does depend on an understanding of the specific meanings of words at the time, so it is a challenge for contemporary directors and actors to deliver dialogue in a way that will mean something to a modern audience.

Repetition and Lists

Shakespeare uses repetition of words and phrases throughout the play. Sylvius’s repetition of the phrase ‘Thou hast not loved’ (II.iv), Orlando’s repetition of ‘If ever’ (II.vii), the lovers repetition of ‘and so am I for’ and Rosalind’s repetition of ‘I will help you if I can’ (V.ii) – all of these give an artificial and almost ritualistic quality to these speeches which heightens the theatricality and gives weight and importance.

He also uses lists regularly, for example when Rosalind tells Orlando what a lover looks like:

A lean cheek, which you have not; a blue eye and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not (III.ii. 358 -361)

This piling up of phrases is often used for comic effect but also can enhance meaning and fully explore an idea for an audience.
This speech, given by Jaques in Act Two, has become one of the most quoted, recited, illustrated and analysed pieces in Shakespeare. It is often presented as a piece of observational comedy, an interlude in the play giving an opportunity to entertain the audience. It has nothing to connect it to the general narrative and works very well as a stand alone piece. In it, he describes the seven stages that people go through in their lives, from birth to death.

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,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress’ eyebrow; then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon’s mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound; last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN

Infant
a screaming, vomiting baby

Schoolboy
who hates school

Lover
writing ridiculous poems

Soldier
quick to take offence, quarrelsome, fame seeking.

Judge
fat, easily bribed (one who accepted a ‘capon’ or
chicken as a bribe was known as a ‘capon justice’)

Old man
like the foolish ‘Pantaloon’ from Italian commedia
dell’ arte, with glasses, baggy stockings, a thin voice.

Second childhood
a very old man becomes like a baby again,
without teeth, eyes, taste.
Practical drama activity is a great way to look further at some of the characters, text and themes of the play. These exercises can be done in the classroom and need no previous experience of drama.

Solo work

- Read this extract from Orlando’s first love poem to Rosalind aloud. How do we know that Orlando is not a very good poet? N.B. In line 1 – ‘Ind’ is short for ‘Indies’ and is pronounced to rhyme with wind.

> From the east to western Ind,
> No jewel is like Rosalind.
> Her worth, being mounted on the wind,
> Through all the world bears Rosalind.
> All the pictures fairest lined
> Are but black to Rosalind.
> Let no face be kept in mind,
> But the fair of Rosalind.

- Write a bad love poem with poor rhymes and lots of cliches and read it to the class in a comic way.

In Pairs

**IMPROVISE:** to act something out without preparing beforehand or reading a script. Think about your character and what you think he/she would say. Try and respond to your partner/group as you think your character would.

Improvise the following:

- A young person is being thrown out of their home by an older relative.
- A person disguises themselves and talks to their girlfriend / boyfriend (who doesn’t recognise them) about their relationship.
- Play this scene again; this time the girlfriend / boyfriend does recognise them but doesn’t let on.
- Siblings have a serious argument that stops them speaking to each other.
- Then improvise a situation where something happens to make them forget their argument and become friends again.

In a group

**TABLEAU:** a still or frozen image created by all the members of the group. Members of the group can represent people or objects.

- Look at the ‘All the world’s a stage...’ speech on page 19. Make a series of tableaux that represent each of the seven stages of man that Jaques describes.
- Create two tableaux to describe the different worlds of the court and the forest. They can be abstract, using shapes to suggest atmosphere. Add sound and movement to each one – again these can be abstract

The whole class

Split the class into boys and girls. The boys should stand, walk round the room, sit down, talk to each other and generally behave in a natural way (try not to exaggerate!). Girls – pick a boy to copy, watch them very carefully, then follow them round the room, copying them exactly. Let the boys sit down and watch the girls acting as boys. Then begin again, this time with the boys copying the girls. How does acting like a member of the opposite sex change the way you feel and behave?
Study Questions

Here are some questions to help students make an analysis of the Royal Lyceum’s production of As You Like It.

• Describe the set. How were the two different spaces represented? What did the design tell us about the difference in atmosphere of the environments?

• How did the actors use the different areas of the set?

• Describe one character’s costume in the court and in the forest. How did the costume change and what did this represent?

• Describe the physical changes in the actor playing Rosalind when Rosalind was pretending to be a boy. Was Ganymede a convincing boy? Did you notice any moments when she became Rosalind momentarily when being Ganymede?

• Describe the music in the performance. Did it suit the atmosphere of the environment? What was the effect of having singing in the forest?

• Describe the lighting in the two different settings. How did the lighting effects work with the set to build up an environment?

• Choose two characters who had a relationship on stage. What was their relationship like? Did it change? What did the actors do to show this?

• Which parts of the play made you laugh? Describe why you think they were funny.

These questions are to help with further study of the play text.

• What elements of As You Like It define it as a Pastoral Romance?

• Compare the worlds of the court and the forest in As You Like It.

• Jaques says he wishes that he could be a fool: ‘I am ambitious for a motley coat’. What elements of the Touchstone’s character does Jaques admire and why?

• How does Rosalind’s character change when she is dressed as a boy?

• Would you agree that Rosalind is the most feminist of Shakespeare’s female characters?

• Make an analysis of Jaques speech, ‘All the world’s a stage’ (reproduced on page 19) picking out the similes, metaphors and other imagery that he uses. What is he saying about the nature of humanity?

• Look at the wooing scene between Orlando and Rosalind (IV.i. 34 – 185). Pick out a pun or piece of wordplay and explain how it is constructed.

• In the above scene, does Orlando suspect that Ganymede is Rosalind? What would be the difference for an actor playing Orlando who did suspect and an actor playing Orlando who did not suspect?
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