

HAMLET

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Antoni Cimolino

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grade 7 and up.

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

May 5, 8, 13, 20, 22, 29; June 4, 10, 12, 17, 19;
September 10, 11, 15, 22, 25, 30; October 2, 7.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Hamlet has been performed more than any other play in the world and has had more written about it than any other literary work (and has had more translations, spoofs, send-ups and spin-offs). “To be or not to be” is the most quoted phrase in the English language. Written by William Shakespeare sometime between late 1599 and early 1601, mid-way through his career, *Hamlet* is often called the greatest play by the greatest playwright.

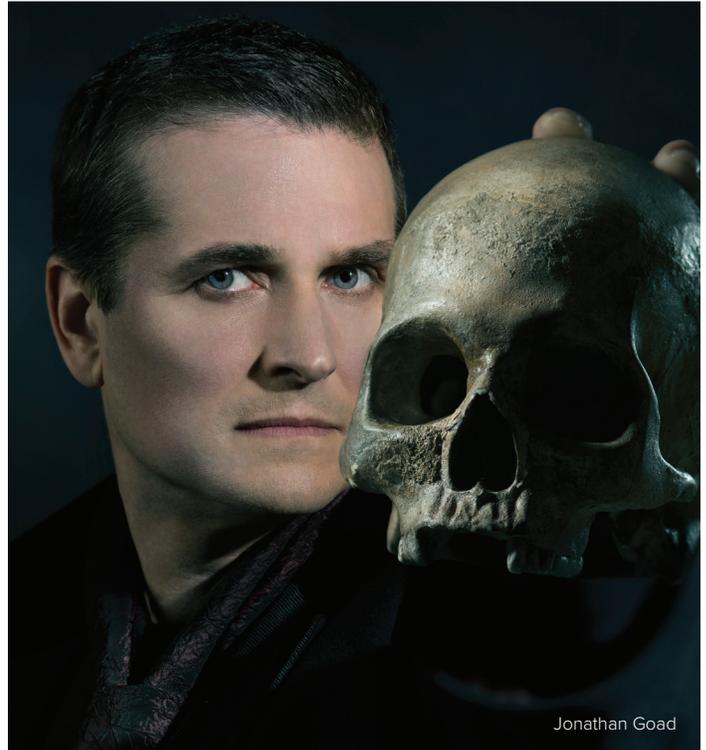
Shakespeare’s source is the so-called *ur-Hamlet*, a lost play that was popular in London in the 1580s. It was believed to have been written by Thomas Kyd, derived from a tale in François Belleforest’s collection *Histoire Tragiques* (1570). It in turn was derived from a ninth-century saga about a pre-Viking prince called Amleth (or Amlothi or Amlethus, depending on the source).

Hamlet has inspired 26 ballets, six operas and dozens of musical works from Tchaikovsky and Liszt to Shostakovich. There have been more than 45 movie versions of *Hamlet*, including those by Laurence Olivier, Mel Gibson and Kenneth Branagh. It is the longest play Shakespeare wrote – running 4½ to 5 hours uncut. Hamlet has more lines than any other Shakespeare character: 1,530.

SYNOPSIS

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is in mourning for his dead father, the king. He’s also disturbed by how quickly his mother, Gertrude, has remarried – and by the fact that her new spouse is Claudius, her late husband’s brother (and thus Hamlet’s uncle).

Hamlet’s disgust at this incestuous union, which has also robbed him of his succession to the throne, turns



to fury when his father’s ghost appears and reveals that he was murdered by Claudius. Vowing revenge, Hamlet decides to feign madness until an opportunity presents itself. Polonius, the lord chamberlain, thinks that Hamlet’s strange behaviour springs from love for his daughter, Ophelia, but Claudius soon begins to suspect otherwise.

The arrival of a travelling theatre company gives Hamlet the idea of re-enacting his father’s murder to startle Claudius into revealing his guilt. Claudius is indeed shocked by the performance, but Hamlet’s triumph is short-lived; while arguing with his mother in her bedroom, he stabs an eavesdropper hiding behind a curtain, only to discover that it is Polonius he has killed, not Claudius.

Claudius sends Hamlet to England, secretly intending to have him put to death there. Meanwhile, Ophelia, driven mad by grief, commits suicide. Hamlet escapes, however, and returns to Denmark, whereupon Claudius urges Laertes to challenge him to a fencing match, in which Laertes will secretly poison the tip of his sword. But when both combatants receive mortal wounds, the dying Laertes reveals the plot, whereupon Hamlet kills Claudius before succumbing to his own inevitable fate.

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Contains some sexual innuendo and scenes of violence.

THEMES

- Disorder, Death & Afterlife
- Power & Politics
- Family
- The Supernatural: Good or Evil
- Madness & Melancholia
- Public vs Private
- Entrapment
- Honour & Revenge
- Sin & Virtue
- Appearance vs Reality
- Sickness & Corruption
- Confinement, Responsibility & Freedom
- The Impossibility of Certainty
- Action vs Inaction
- The Nature of Existence
- Love & Sex

MOTIFS

- Incest & Desire
- Misogyny
- Ears/Hearing
- Disease, Rotting & Decay
- Actors & Theatre

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- All Grades: Language/English (Listening to Understand, Speaking to Communicate, Reading for Meaning, Critical Literacy)
- All Grades: Drama, Music, Visual Art
- Gr. 7 – 12 Health & PE (Living Skills: Personal, Interpersonal, Critical & Creative Thinking; Decision Making; Conflict Resolution; Social Skills)
- Gr. 7 – 8 Health & PE (Personal Safety and Injury Prevention: Mental Health, Stress Management)
- Gr. 11 – 12 Health & PE (Personal Safety & Injury Prevention: Mental Health)
- Gr. 11 World History to the 16th century
- Gr. 11 – 12 Interdisciplinary Studies (Faith, Belief &

Imagery / Aging & Society / Faith & Culture)

- Gr. 11 Social Sciences & Humanities (Gender Studies / Equity, Diversity & Social Justice / Dynamics of Human Relationships / Intro to Anthropology, Psychology & Sociology / Philosophy)

ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides.

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) at 11 a.m. before every student matinée except May 29; September 10, 11.

Private workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

Additional classroom activities and ideas for engagement with the text can be found at stratfordfestival.ca/teachingmaterials.

LET US TAKE CARE OF LUNCH!

Picnic lunches are available anytime (must be ordered two weeks in advance) and Student Deli Lunch Buffets are another option (subject to availability). For more information, see page 11 of the Schools Guide (available online) or ask the Groups and Schools Department when placing your ticket order.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Respect the actors and your fellow patrons. When the lights dim, it is time to be quiet and engage with the actors on stage. Be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from texting, talking or eating, as this is disrespectful to the actors who are telling the story.

Respond to what you see through laughter, tears, smiles, giggles or captivated silence. The actors feed off your presence and response to their work on stage. Don't respond by talking to your neighbour; please wait until after the performance to discuss your thoughts.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online

Order at any time and select your seats! Visit stratfordfestival.ca/festivaltrip.

Phone

1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

Fax

519.273.3731

Email

groups@stratfordfestival.ca

Download an order form at

stratfordfestival.ca/orderform

Mail

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