

2010 Age Recommendations

ANGUS BOWMER THEATRE

These play descriptions provide specific content information and our recommendation for age appropriateness.

Each school and community is unique, so please read carefully to determine what is appropriate for your students. Please be aware that these recommendations are made before the plays go into rehearsal. Occasionally decisions are made during the rehearsal process or preview performances that change the suitability of a production. When changes occur, the Education Department posts updated age recommendations on our website and makes every effort to contact group leaders.

Questions? Please contact OSF Group Sales or the Education Department at education@osfashland.org.

Hamlet

William Shakespeare
February 19–October 30

Prince Hamlet's father, the King of Denmark, dies suddenly while Hamlet is away at college in Germany. Before Hamlet can return and claim the kingship, his uncle Claudius takes the throne and marries his former sister-in-law, Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude. Hamlet's depression over these events deepens and grows into rage when a spirit purporting to be the ghost of his father claims that he was murdered by Claudius and commands Hamlet to avenge his death. This tale of revenge, played out against a backdrop of politics and intrigue, deals with madness, murder and betrayal. It contains sexual dialogue and violent deaths, including a possible suicide. Considered by many to be not just Shakespeare's but western drama's greatest achievement, it touches on every essential element of the human condition. **It is suitable and highly recommended for mature 12-year-olds and up. Prologue recommended.**

Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen
Adapted for the stage by
Joseph Hanreddy and J. R. Sullivan
February 21–October 31

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." So asserts Jane Austen in one of the world's favorite love stories. Mrs. Bennet, blessed with five lively daughters, is only too happy to help her new neighbor, Mr. Bingley, achieve the wedded state, as long as his fancy lights on her eldest, Jane. Bingley's friend Mr. Darcy is another matter altogether—fabulously wealthy, to be sure, but too proud to notice any of the Bennet girls. Until, that is, the witty and perceptive Elizabeth declines to be impressed or intimidated by his riches and social position. Two rocky journeys to love, traveled by two attractive couples, make up the plot of this delightful comedy of manners. The sharply drawn supporting characters, the ironic commentary on class and convention and the depiction of the role of women in Regency England all enrich the tale. **The subtlety and complexity of language will be best enjoyed by 10-year-olds and up, especially those with an interest in historic romance. Prologue recommended.**

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Tennessee Williams
February 20–July 4

Maggie and Brick's marriage is on the rocks, for reasons that are slowly revealed over the course of a two-day birthday celebration for Brick's father, Big Daddy. Big Daddy may (or may not) be dying of cancer, and the future of his plantation troubles his mind. He wants to leave it to Brick, but Brick's growing love of alcohol may make that impossible. Maggie, desperate for Brick

to inherit and for her marriage to survive, will go to extraordinary lengths to achieve these goals. Set in the American South of the 1950s, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is a sexually charged drama of a dysfunctional family dealing with death, alcoholism, infidelity, homosexuality and long repressed feelings. The play masterfully combines laughter with darkness and emotional violence, demonstrating why Tennessee Williams is one of America's greatest playwrights and why *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is one of his most enduringly popular works. **Best suited for students 14 and up who can handle the mature themes. Prologue recommended.**

She Loves Me

Book by Joe Masteroff, music and lyrics
by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick
April 21–October 30

A charming musical from the early 1960s, based on the Hungarian play *The Parfumerie*, which also inspired the films *The Shop around the Corner*, *In the Good Old Summertime* and *You've Got Mail*. Georg works at Maraczek's Parfumerie in Budapest in the 1930s. For reasons he cannot fathom, the owner has taken a dislike to him, and his job may be in jeopardy. Georg takes a dislike of his own to the new clerk, Amalia, and she returns it heartily. What they don't know is that they are already falling in love by means of an anonymous correspondence, calling each other "Dear Friend." *She Loves Me* explores love relationships, contrasting the naïve Georg and Amalia with the jaded Kodaly and the all-too-gullible Ilona. As the title suggests, it's a play about love—the longing for love, the folly of mistaking counterfeit for the real thing and the wonder of being loved for one's true self. The play touches on marital infidelity and romantic affairs; **therefore it is best suited for students age 10 and up who are able to handle the subject matter.**

Throne of Blood

World Premiere

Adaptation by Ping Chong based on the film by Akira Kurosawa
Original screenplay by Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni, Shinobu Hashimoto and Ryuzo Kikushima

Akira Kurosawa's classic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* adapted for the stage.

July 21–October 31

In medieval Japan, General Washizu, lost in the forest, meets a witch who predicts that he will soon be the lord of Spider Web Castle ... and so begins a familiar tale. The story is a stylized and visually arresting distillation of Shakespeare's plot; it simplifies by paring away parts of the original and at the same time surprises by adding plot twists absent from Shakespeare's version. Drawing on the conventions of Japanese Noh theatre, it explores the way one great theatre culture interprets a masterpiece from another. There are creepy, supernatural characters and settings, and the same themes of betrayal and murder as in *Macbeth*. **Suitable for students 13 and up who are prepared to handle the themes.**

NEW THEATRE

Well

Lisa Kron

February 25–June 18

Lisa has brought some actors in to help tell us the story of her battles with illness and wellness. Why do some people sicken but then get well, while others remain ill for years and years? As a young woman, Lisa had to withdraw from college to be admitted to the Allergy Unit of Henrotin Hospital in Chicago. She and her mother, Ann, have different views of what happened there, and of why and how Lisa

The Servant of Two Masters (2009): Mark Bedard, Eileen DeSandre, David Kelly and Richard Howard

got well and moved on with her life. Lisa has included Ann in the dramatic re-creation, but doesn't want her to play too large a role. Before long, Lisa begins to lose control of the show, as Ann insists on telling her side of the story, and one unexpected and unwelcome character after another from Lisa's past intrudes.

A funny play that constantly breaks the boundaries between audience and performers, *Well* examines themes of health and racial integration and contains occasional strong profanity. Suitable for students 13 and up.

Ruined

Lynn Nottage

March 24–October 31

In the present-day Congo, Sophie earns her keep by singing for the customers at Mama Nadi's brothel. She cannot work as a prostitute because of her "ruin" at the hands of soldiers, who raped her with a bayonet and left her for dead. Mama, the madam, is a modern-day *Mother Courage*, desperately hanging on to her livelihood in the midst of shifting allegiances, and protecting, as best she can, her girls—each "ruined" in her own way by the atrocities of war. *Ruined* looks unflinchingly at the causes and consequences of the civil war, while keeping alive the possibility of dignity and even love. There are frequent disturbing descriptions of rape and other acts of violence and occasional strong profanity. Nevertheless, it is a hopeful and moving story—fiction based on fact—of

resiliency and courage. *Ruined* was recently awarded the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for drama. **The play's educational and emotional value is enormous. Suitable and highly recommended for well-prepared students 14 and up who are able to handle the mature themes and language. Prologue recommended.**

American Night

World Premiere

Richard Montoya and Culture Clash
June 29–October 31

The premiere play in OSF's U.S. History Cycle, an ongoing project commissioning and developing works that deal with transformation and change in the history of our country. While studying for his U.S. citizenship test, Juan Jose is transported in time to revisit significant historical moments. Some are famous, beginning with Lewis and Clark; some involve Juan Jose's own ancestors; and some are true stories of real people who never became famous. There is Viola Canada Pettis, a black woman who cared for children through the flu pandemic of 1918 in spite of bigotry and hostility. And Mexican-American Ralf Lazo, who during World War II insisted on moving to an internment camp to join his Japanese-American friends. **Full of warmth, wit and fascinating stories, *American Night* is still in development. Currently it contains some mild profanity and some possible violence; it is recommended for students 12 and up. Age recommendations will be updated on our website closer to the opening of the production.**



JENNY GRAHAM

Twelfth Night

William Shakespeare
June 1–October 8

In the enchanted land of Illyria, a giddy kind of love and madness rule. Count Orsino believes he is in love with the Countess Olivia. But Olivia, having recently lost both her father and her brother, has plunged herself and her household into an extravagant seven-year period of mourning and will entertain no thought of marriage. Into this elegant but static society comes the outsider Viola, survivor of a shipwreck that apparently drowned her twin brother. Her grief is as deep as Olivia's but she doesn't have the luxury of giving in to it. Alone, friendless and forced to provide for herself, she pretends to be a boy, enters Count Orsino's service and falls in love with him. When she is sent as a messenger with his amorous messages to Olivia, Olivia immediately falls in love with him (her!).

***Twelfth Night*, written at the peak of Shakespeare's comedic brilliance, seamlessly balances and blends bright and dark elements. The play is suitable for ages six and up, however the poetry and themes will be best enjoyed by well-prepared and mature students 10 and up. Prologue recommended.**

Henry IV, Part One

William Shakespeare
June 2–October 9

King Henry's heir, Prince Hal, would rather spend his days and nights carousing with his drinking buddy Sir John Falstaff than preparing to assume the mantle of leadership. Meanwhile, a disagreement between the King and the famed soldier Hotspur over the disposition of prisoners of war threatens to boil over into rebellion and civil war. This is the coming of age story of a rebellious young man trapped in a classic father-son conflict, but with a difference—this particular young man is destined to become King of England.



DAVID COOPER

Don Quixote (2009): Mark Murphey, John Pribyl, Miriam A. Laube, Danforth Comins, Anna-Lisa Chacon and Robin Goodrin Nordli.

During the play we see Hal grow from a dissolute and idle youth to a commander capable of defeating Hotspur and taking on the role his country expects of him. **Scenes of politics and battle alternate with comic depictions of Prince Hal's forays into petty theft and debauchery with his companions at the Boar's Head Tavern. It is suitable for students 10 and up who are able to handle the bawdiness of the Boar's Head Tavern. Prologue recommended.**

The Merchant of Venice

William Shakespeare
June 3–October 10

Bassanio wants to wed the wealthy heiress Portia, but according to her late father's will, any wooer must hazard his future

happiness by passing a test before he can claim Portia in marriage. Bassanio's friend, the Venetian merchant Antonio, risks his fortune—and, as it turns out, his life—to finance Bassanio's courtship. He has borrowed money from his adversary Shylock, a member of the Jewish community, and if he forfeits on the loan, Shylock may claim a pound of Antonio's flesh. *The Merchant of Venice*, although disturbing and veering dangerously close to tragedy, is nevertheless a comedy ... that happens to deal with such un-comic issues as bigotry and hatred. **The play ends happily for some, unhappily for others, and grapples with many more types of alienation and "otherness" than many people realize. It is suitable for well-prepared 10-year-olds and up who are able to handle these complex themes. Prologue recommended.**

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