Rebecca Taichman on Transcendent Transformations
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Columbia Professor Jean E. Howard discusses Shakespearean Metatheatre
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Dear Friend,

There is something beautiful and beguiling about *The Winter’s Tale*, one of Shakespeare’s late romances. In this story of a woman wronged, a daughter lost and a king who must learn the error of his ways, the audience may interpret the ending as supernatural or mysterious. Every director approaches this play in a different way and I know D.C. audiences will love STC Affiliated Artist Rebecca Taichman’s work on this production.

Rebecca’s reimagining of Shakespeare’s story turns an empty theatre canvas into a vibrant playground for the imagination. Her collaboration with the talented design team brings out themes of transformation in every sight and sound of this production. The use of a nine-member ensemble to portray 16 parts through doublings also sheds new light on the relationships between the play’s characters. I am pleased with STC’s foray into a small cast Shakespeare production, which grew and evolved thanks to our collaboration with the excellent team at the McCarter Theatre Center.

This issue of *Asides* explores the play’s intriguing dualities, its use of theatricality and time, iconic moments in the play’s staging history and insights into our production. You can also learn more about the world-renowned composer for this show’s music, Nico Muhly, and the doublings of the characters.

We hope you enjoy our final mainstage show of the 2012–2013 Season and we look forward to seeing you in our theatres again soon.

Warm regards,

Michael Kahn
Artistic Director
Shakespeare Theatre Company
Thoughts from Director Rebecca Taichman

...on The Winter’s Tale.
One of Shakespeare’s late romances, The Winter’s Tale is a study in tonal collision—sliding from tragedy to comedy and back again. We careen through the dangerous, moneyed Sicilian court, into the comic Bohemian countryside and back again. The play contains multiple and ever-shifting webs of meaning. As a director, the visual and theatrical challenges are... well... absurdly difficult and wonderfully exciting. You’ve got that famous stage direction: “Exit, pursued by a bear.” You’ve got a statue that needs to come to life. You’ve got two tonally opposite worlds that somehow need to make illogical logic together.

...on doubling actors and cutting the play.
Our production is organized around a central theme in the play: transformation. The Winter’s Tale investigates how the human spirit can be transformed by jealousy, by love, by forgiveness. Our story is told by a company of nine actors—much the same, perhaps, to Shakespeare’s Lord Chamberlain’s Men—in which everyone in Sicilia plays everyone in Bohemia. Hopefully at the heart of the endeavor you will feel a celebration of the actors’ capacity to contain multitudes. Shakespeare was celebrating our capacity for contradiction and multiplicity, and so too does this production.

...on what the audience should know.
In the final scene, Paulina says: “It is required / You do awake your faith.” I read this, in some measure, as an ask on Shakespeare’s part—a hope the audience will open its spirit to the impossible rendered possible, to grace and enchantment, to the stammering power of forgiveness. I suppose that would be my ask as well—that in watching the play, you attempt to awaken your faith—to the strange, miraculous power of theatre, the actor, transformation itself.

Article courtesy of McCarter Theatre Center.
Theatricality, Artifice and the Mended World in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*

by Jean E. Howard, Ph.D.

In a charming domestic scene at the start of act 2 of *The Winter’s Tale*, Queen Hermione, pregnant with her second child, asks her son, Mamillius, to tell her a story. He says: “Merry or sad shall’t be?” and she replies “As merry as you will.” But Mamillius has other ideas: “A sad tale’s best for winter. I have one / Of sprites and goblins” (act 2, scene 1). While Shakespeare’s play has no goblins or sprites, it does, at least for its first three acts, traffic in sadness: King Leontes’ irrational sexual jealousy, the estrangement of the king from his wife Hermione, the death of his son and the supposed death of his infant daughter and wife. It is an icy and tragic “winter’s tale” indeed. But in this play Shakespeare has things two ways. In a miraculous reversal of expectations, in its last two acts *The Winter’s Tale* becomes a happier story of regeneration, resurrection and reunion. As a result, the play is both a sad tale and a merry one, a perfect tragicomedy.

The conversation between Mamillius and his mother signals to the audience Shakespeare’s own preoccupation in his late plays with old tales and moldy stories. In these plays he draws on ancient tales and mythic tropes to put in stark relief primal patterns of human experience. *The Winter’s Tale*’s basic structure recalls the myth of Persephone, a beautiful young girl abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld, from a flowering field where she was playing. Allowed to return six months of every year to the earth’s surface, Persephone’s comings and goings explain the cycle of

Costume design for the masque *Oberon the Faery Prince* by Inigo Jones (17th Century).
winter and summer, sorrow and joy, that structure both human life and old stories like *The Winter’s Tale*. The play also evokes Christian narratives. Leontes, overcome by evil, commits great wrongs, but after a long period of penitence, receives the gift of grace: the return of his daughter and the seeming resurrection of his wife. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare writes in the shadow of all these tales to create his own dramatic fiction about humanity’s appalling capacity for destruction and also about the possibilities for regeneration through time, penitence and the helping hand of art.

In making his play, Shakespeare does not hesitate to let the bones of his art show. For example, when he has depicted the full horrors of Leontes’ destructive jealousy and looks toward the time of regeneration, an allegorical figure named Time signals the transition. At the beginning of act 4, alone on stage, Time announces that 16 years have passed and that the action has shifted to Bohemia, where Leontes’ daughter, Perdita, banished and believed dead, has grown to young womanhood. Although the stage directions don’t specify how the play was staged during Shakespeare’s life, Time probably wore wings, signaling how rapidly time passes, and carried an hourglass and a scythe, traditional symbols of his destructive power. Time is not a “realistic” figure; he’s an emblematic one, a device that lets Shakespeare self-consciously point to the ways he is disregarding the classical unities that insist a play’s action must take place in one day and one place. Time says:

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Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage that I slide
O’er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o’erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plan and o’erwhelm custom (act 4, scene 1)
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In his late plays Shakespeare often heightens the overt theatricality of his dramas, pointing to the artifice that goes into their construction and making the powers and limitations of art part of the subject matter of these plays. *The Winter's Tale* is no exception. In act 4, in the springtime world of Bohemia, there is even a conversation between Polixenes, King of Bohemia and Perdita about the importance and value of art in human life. Perdita is given the skeptic's part, arguing that art dilutes or perverts nature; Polixenes disagrees, using a gardening metaphor to argue for the value of the gardener's art whereby he grafts one plant onto another to produce hybrids and new varieties of vegetation. In Polixenes' view, “This is an art / Which does mend nature—change it rather; but / The art itself is nature” (act 4, scene 4). In other words, human skill and artfulness can create something new, and that very artfulness is part of man’s natural inheritance.

The play's theatricality is heightened by the number of artist figures within it. There are con artists like the peddler Autolycus who wear disguises as part of elaborately theatrical scams to relieve people of their money, and unwitting artists like Perdita, who, even as she rails against art, dresses up as Queen of the sheep-shearing feast. Perdita thus plays a game of make-believe that ironically reveals the truth of her nature. Rather than a shepherd’s daughter, she is a king’s; and her artful pageant unwittingly acknowledges the underlying reality of her identity. In this case, art is truer than life! Then there are the powerfully positive artist figures of Camillo and Paulina, servants and counselors who try to mend their worlds through artful fictions. When Florizel’s father discovers Perdita and Florizel’s love, he forbids it, causing the counselor Camillo to intervene on the side of the young lovers. Camillo devises an elaborate fiction in which Florizel is to sail to Leontes’ kingdom and present Perdita as a Libyan Princess he has married. Camillo even dresses the young lovers in costumes appropriate for the parts they will play and provides them with lines to say. Factually, his story is a lie. Perdita is not a Libyan Princess, and the two young people are not yet married. But Camillo’s fiction presents an image of the world he would like to see in which young love gets to live out its desires and the innate nobility of two young people can be acknowledged. Eventually, in Sicily, Perdita’s royal birth is revealed, and she and Florizel do get to wed. Camillo’s old tale has presaged a world transformed.

Shakespeare takes the greatest risks, however, with the magnificent statue scene that concludes his play. This is one of the most highly theatrical and metadramatic scenes in Shakespeare’s entire canon. Paulina, a lady in waiting at the court of Leontes and a staunch champion of his wife’s sexual fidelity, orchestrates an encounter in which Leontes and Perdita, Leontes’ lost daughter, view a newly-completed statue of Hermione, the lost wife and mother. The statue depicts not the young Hermione, but a woman wrinkled by time. Bidding all who stand before the statue to “awake [their] faith” (act 5, scene 3), Paulina enjoins the statue to move and then to speak. What happens next is open to multiple understandings as the statue does indeed step down from its pedestal. From one perspective, a miracle akin to the Christian miracle of the risen Christ seems to occur right before the audience’s eyes. From another perspective, the play suggests that the statue has so moved the audience that their faith has willed it into life. This recalls the
story of Pygmalion, the goldsmith who dearly loved the statue he created, and because of his passion, Venus granted the statue life. There is also a naturalistic explanation for the statue’s movements: Hermione did not really die 16 years before, but was kept in hiding by Paulina as both women waited for the prophecy to be fulfilled that “the King shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found” (act 3, scene 2). What is lost, of course, is the banished daughter, who returns to Leontes in act 5. As is usual with Shakespeare’s dramatic practice, it is not possible to separate art from nature and, in this case, from miracle. In his highly theatrical climax, Shakespeare suggests in one vivid action that a religious miracle of faith has occurred, that a long-kept secret has been revealed, and that art has led the way in “mending” nature.

Ben Jonson, Shakespeare’s contemporary, complained of plays that “make nature afraid,” by which he seems to have meant plays that eschewed realism and the unities and present fantastic or impossible events. *The Winter’s Tale* is just such a play. It contains Father Time, a walking statue, improbable coincidences and movement over vast stretches of time and geography. But like the old tales that attract Mamillius and his mother, *The Winter’s Tale* gives pleasure and brings clarity. Its stark two-part structure intimates both how human beings can destroy their own happiness and also how, sometimes, it can be restored. Like Paulina, Shakespeare is a maker of fictions that tease us with the possibility that art can spur new life, new ways of seeing and so mend the nature that we as humans so easily endanger.

Jean E. Howard (Ph.D., Yale) is the George Delacorte Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. Author of many books, she has received numerous fellowships and awards including Guggenheim, ACLS, NEH, Folger, Huntington and Newberry Library Fellowships.
Tales Told

A look at notable past productions of The Winter’s Tale

by Jacob Janssen

Passing in and out of favor with audiences and critics, The Winter’s Tale can be something of an enigma. Like many of Shakespeare’s late plays, The Winter’s Tale does not fall neatly into one genre, but rather is a blend. For these reasons this “problem play” has attracted the attention of some of the theatre’s greatest storytellers, looking to leave their mark on Shakespeare’s most bewildering masterpiece.

1910
Directed by Winthrop Ames, New York’s New Theatre

As a young director, famed Broadway producer Winthrop Ames aspired to innovate in his own time by looking to the past. Ames discarded the pretense and convention of the Victorian stage, attempting to recreate an authentic Elizabethan theatrical experience. His bare thrust stage brought the actors to the audience, in simple costumes that would not draw the audience’s attention from the play. Ames’ staging encouraged his audience to engage with the language of the play in a way they had never done before.

1951
Directed by Peter Brook, UK

Peter Brook’s 1951 production is remarkable for the fact that Brook’s production stands, to this day, as the longest uninterrupted run of the play on record with 167 performances. Adding to the significance, he was only 26 years old when he directed it. John Gielgud, already a widely acclaimed stage and screen star, presented a brooding and intense vision of Leontes which became a 20th-century touchstone for the role. The two artists’ reportedly contentious working relationship and the success of the production established Brook as a major director and theatrical theorist.
1995
Directed by Ingmar Bergman, Sweden
Famed for his screen work, in 1995, Ingmar Bergman once again turned his attention to the stage. Attempting to remedy what he saw as narrative irregularities, Bergman chose to create a frame-tale for the play, the dramatic action becoming a masque at a regal birthday celebration. Bergman’s statue scene was defined by Leontes’ profound Catholic repentance and flagellation before a statue of the Virgin Mary, in a mode one might call “Bergmanesque.” His production also included not one but two bears, a brown bear and a polar bear. This production was intended to be Bergman’s theatrical swansong; however, he would go on to direct for the theatre until the very end of his life.

2002
Directed by Michael Kahn, Washington’s Shakespeare Theatre Company
Michael Kahn was no stranger to The Winter’s Tale in 2002. That staging of the Tale would be his third, after his first at the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, in 1975, and another at STC in 1987. Kahn’s 2002 production in many ways revolved around time, and not just thematically. Kahn, building on Shakespeare’s unique dramaturgy, interpolated the character of Time, making it a force that could not be avoided. The 2002 production starred Philip Goodwin as Leontes and Lise Bruneau as Hermione, actors both recently seen on the STC stage in Coriolanus and Wallenstein during the Hero/Traitor Repertory.

Jacob Janssen is STC’s 2013 Artistic Fellow. Before joining STC he worked at The Folger Shakespeare Library and Primary Stages. Jacob holds a BFA in Acting from the University of Wisconsin.
Small Cast, Big Impact
Productions with reduced casts find new ways to tell stories
by Laura Henry Buda

A Shakespeare play can demand an enormous cast: *Henry IV, Part 2* has 67 parts. But, in staging a play, there are many reasons to use fewer actors. In high school, the drama club could be too small for a large production, or there may not be enough boys for all the male roles. Maybe an upstart theatre company doesn’t have the funds to costume 67 actors; maybe they don’t have the funds to pay 67 actors. Perhaps the miniscule black box performance space can’t physically hold more than 67, including audience. But why might a big company choose to limit the size of their cast?

The struggle between art and logistics has been managed by theatre artists since Shakespeare was writing. Academics still wonder: were some of Shakespeare’s dramaturgical choices dictated by his (most likely) thirteen-actor company? Were roles doubled for practicality, or was Shakespeare exploiting the convention for dramatic effect? Modern directors often choose to double- or even triple-cast their actors in multiple roles, sometimes for efficiency but also for specific artistic goals. Forced to be creative with staging, rhythm and narrative, a small group of actors tells a more dynamic story with less. Small casts are a potent artistic tool, an interpretive instrument to tease out new ideas in well-worn plays.

One of the most prominent recent examples of a “small-cast Shakespeare” performed was Fiasco Theater’s 2011 *Cymbeline*, another of Shakespeare’s late plays. With six actors and a minimalist set, *Cymbeline* was an ironic success, playing next door to the infamous Broadway behemoth *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*. Surprisingly, the most common accolade bestowed in reviews was the production’s clarity. With a small cast playing two, three or four parts each, Fiasco managed to make a fantastically complicated fairy tale into a coherent narrative, sorting out the tricky spots of the play with ingenuity. Performers hopped from character to character; crates and a white sheet fashioned the disparate landscapes of the play; an actor clicked billiard balls to provide sound for a game of pool. This was not realism. Instead, the audience was asked to activate their own mental agility. As the *New York Times* marveled, the sheet alone became “a billowing sea, a virginal bedspread, a mournful shroud and a Roman toga, among other things.” Fiasco’s inspired resourcefulness, in
the end, told a more convincing story. A fully-formed production emerged through collective imagination, a creative exercise that can only exist when freed of the clutter of hyper-produced, over-conceptualized Shakespeare.

In addition to demanding ingenuity in staging and story, a small cast can highlight an important theme or element. *Shakespeare’s R+J*, seen recently at Signature Theatre, told the story of Romeo and Juliet with just four young men. In this rendition, the Shakespeare tale was a play-within-a-play, acted out in secret by four students at a repressive private school. Performing alone in their dorm, the four played all of Shakespeare’s characters—and in the process told their own forbidden love story. This structure highlighted the penetrating, cathartic power of Shakespeare’s play. Conversely, in the New York production of *Macbeth* directed by John Tiffany (*Black Watch, Once*), the small cast underlined artistic virtuosity. Playing as many as eight different roles, Alan Cumming delivered a tour-de-force performance as a patient bouncing through multiple personalities in an insane asylum. The premise highlighted Cumming’s arresting physicality and gender-bending, and added a new note of tortured vulnerability to Macbeth’s madness.

The strengths of the small cast aesthetic have also been transferred to contemporary non-Shakespeare—even with productions on a larger scale. Think of Mary Zimmerman’s *Metamorphoses*, most recently produced at Arena Stage. Though the *Metamorphoses* cast was slightly larger at ten actors, each performer played four or five different roles in various stories, creating the impression of a single-minded ensemble conjuring myths from thin air. Similarly, in *Gatz*, the 13-person ensemble of Elevator Repair Service summoned the world of *The Great Gatsby* from a shabby office. The *New York Times* described the birth of Nick Carraway’s world onstage: “This metamorphosis, though, occurs by ingeniously sly degrees, and it seems to be taking place entirely in the reader’s mind... It’s unlikely that these actors... would be cast in these parts in a full-dress, conventional *Gatsby*. But Nick’s vision magically bestows upon them all the traits they require.” Nick’s vision—and the audience’s vision—transports the actors to the many characters and moods of Fitzgerald’s novel. And again, last fall in *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*: five ensemble members played academics and ghosts, demons and debauchers, bringing the ballad from Scotland, to hell and back to the Bier Baron.

A small cast can be a brilliant tool for storytelling, allowing us to focus on the elements of a production that are most essential. But at its core, the potency fomented by a small cast lies in the effect of actors transforming before our eyes. As performers slide in and out of roles, they implicitly highlight the intense magic of theatricality. And in stories like *The Winter’s Tale*, where rebirth and renewal are primary, these transformations are a source of immense power.

Laura Henry Buda is STC’s Education Coordinator and served as Artistic Fellow in the 2011-2012 Season. She holds an MFA in Dramaturgy from the A.R.T./M.X.A.T. Institute at Harvard University.
New Faces, Familiar Friends
Get to know the cast of *The Winter’s Tale*

Brent is constitutionally incapable of a dishonest performance...I know him as the remarkably kind man who once gave me words of encouragement at the Stratford Festival, which is evidence of his generosity of spirit as an actor. This production has been the most amazing reunion for me with actors from Canada, D.C., and even college.

**SEAN ARBUCKLE** (Polixenes)

I’m the youngest member of the company, and a relative newcomer to Shakespeare. Ted has been performing Shakespeare for longer than I’ve been alive. He played Florizel in his twenties! I’m soaking up so much every night by watching and working with them.

**TODD BARTELS** (Dion/Florizel)

I feel so blessed to be allowed to navigate and negotiate the shores and souls of Sicilia, and Bohemia, with Sean, and with this finely tuned, open hearted, well travelled, and truly inspiring Company of artists... thank you all.

**BRENT CARVER** (Camillo)

With his Bachelor’s in Religion from Harvard, Todd brings great wisdom and discovery to Florizel. It’s no wonder Perdita falls head over heels for him...plus he always compliments her new pink dress. This production is beautiful and a thrill. I never thought I’d get to play my own brother and sister!

**HEATHER WOOD** (Mamillius/Time/Perdita)

**ARTISTIC TEAM**

Rebecca Taichman
Director

Christine Jones
Set Designer

David Zinn
Costume Designer

Christopher Akerlind
Lighting Designer

Nico Muhly
Composer

Matt Tierney
Sound Designer

Stephen Feigenbaum
Music Director

Camille A. Brown
Choreographer

Gillian Lane-Plescia
Vocal Coach
The thing that will stay with me from this experience—which is after all, still very much alive—is the journey undertaken together by the nine of us with Rebecca. Knowing them, working with them, coming to value them, makes each performance like an ever-deepening conversation among friends. **TED VAN GRIETHUYSEN** (Antigonus/Old Shepherd)

Tom and Ted are as “gentlemanly” as it gets; they have my back and are great company besides. **NANCY ROBINETTE** (Paulina/Drunken Shepherdess)

I would like to grow old making crazy plays with my friend Rebecca Taichman. **TOM STORY** Cleomenes/Young Shepherd (Clown)

I love how vulnerable Mark’s Leontes is—it makes my journey as Hermione more complicated. The work we do together is true and reactive. Also, he wears odd socks and I always look forward to seeing what he has carefully selected. **HANNAH YELLAND** (Hermione)

The soul you witness in Hermione is Hannah’s soul brought forth by art and generosity of spirit. What you are watching is not a fictional character. She lives. **MARK HARELIK** (Leontes/Autolycus)

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Ellen O’Brien
Head of Voice and Text

Laura Stanczyk, CSA
Casting Director

Daniel Neville-Rehbehn
Resident Casting Director

Carrie Hughes
Drew Lichtenberg
Production Dramaturgs

Jenny Lord
Assistant Director

Alison Cote*
Production Stage Manager

Elizabeth Clewley*
Assistant Stage Manager

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association; the Union of Processional Actors and Stage Managers. Artists subject to change.

Photos by T. Charles Erickson.
Climate Change

Drew's Desk: Thoughts, Notes and Queries from Drew Lichtenberg

The 2012-2013 Season at STC has been one that may throw even climate change believers for a loop. For our midwinter show, we mounted a production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. And now, as we approach the midsummer solstice, we are doing The Winter’s Tale. In other words, the weather inside the theatre has been as topsy-turvy as the skies over the Potomac. And yet it feels apt, somehow, to pair these two plays at opposite ends of the year. They form a bookend in the canon, offering two different perspectives on the passing of time.

Midsummer, for all its virtuosity, is a young man’s play. Using the misadventures of a middle summer’s night—and the fecund, startling imagery therein—Shakespeare tells a tale about the fantastic appetites and desires of young love. Perhaps it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the play was written during Shakespeare’s “lyric period,” in the first third of his career, alongside such other romantic and poetic masterpieces as Romeo and Juliet and Richard II.

Like those plays, Midsummer has a surprisingly complex relationship to genre. Its tone is comic, but it’s a comedy unlike any that had appeared before in dramatic literature. Its images of Ovidian metamorphosis have the power to terrify as much as amuse, and the play unspools into surprising reflections on the power of madness and nightmare. Part of the play’s magic lies in its ability to imbue older, sadder couples with the transformative powers of young love—in particular, the ambiguous royal couples of Theseus and Hippolyta, who preside over Athens, and their Fairyland doppelgängers, Oberon and Titania.

If A Midsummer Night’s Dream has a complex relationship to genre, then The Winter’s Tale is practically unclassifiable.
older, who has been shaped by life and its myriad triumphs and disappointments. Instead of young love, the theme is family ties. The play’s characters form a constellation of parents and children, husbands and wives. As the play opens, two men of middle age—Leontes and Polixenes—wax nostalgic over their lost youth. Polixenes yearns to return home to see his infant son Florizel, who “makes a July’s day short as December.” When Leontes talks to his own infant son, Mamillius, he seems unnerved to see his younger self in the boy:

Looking on the lines
Of my boy’s face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched...
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman. (act 1, scene 2)

Leontes and Polixenes regard the innocence of youth from the perspective of those who have lost it, or, as Polixenes, puts it, have “tripped since” into adulthood. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that The Winter’s Tale was written toward the end of Shakespeare’s career, after he had lost his own son, Hamnet, to death at the tender age of 9. It may be scholarly supposition, but the terrible things that befall Mamillius, Florizel and Perdita in the play seem to bespeak a writer who knows the helpless parent’s pain of losing one’s children. And in Leontes’ relationship with his wife Hermione, Shakespeare paints a terrifying portrait of marital intimacy and betrayal.

If A Midsummer Night’s Dream has a complex relationship to genre, then The Winter’s Tale is practically unclassifiable. The play is often grouped with Shakespeare’s final four plays—along with Pericles, Cymbeline and The Tempest—the so-called “romances.” The term comes to us from Coleridge, who coined it in the first bloom of romanticism for those plays which “arise from their fitness to that faculty of our nature, the imagination... which owes no allegiance to time and place.” And indeed, the play contains joy and sorrow, comedy and tragedy, improbabilities of plot and perfect dramaturgical parallels in a manner that is distinctively Shakespearean. When we suddenly leave the courtly world of Sicilia for the pastoral universe of Bohemia, it feels as if we are entering a world half-remembered in our dreams, a comic universe blooming, like springtime, in the middle of a winter’s tragedy. And when we return to Sicilia, we see one of the most magical and unexpected transformations in the entire Shakespeare canon.

Mamillius seems to evoke the fairy world of Midsummer when he tells Hermione, “A sad tale’s best for winter, I have one of sprites and goblins” (act 2, scene 1). But he is also explaining, obliquely, the title of his own play. Without resorting to the “sprites and goblins” of his dramatic apprenticeship, Shakespeare tells us a tale about the vast panoramic sweep of the human experience, as Leontes puts it, “this wide gap of time.” Just as it is easy to forget the midsummer’s passions in the cold of winter, the first flowers of spring always come as an unexpected shock after the winter’s snow.

Drew Lichtenberg is the Literary Associate at STC and production dramaturg for The Winter’s Tale. He holds an MFA in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism from Yale School of Drama.
Weaving the Tapestry
Crafting transformations in *The Winter’s Tale*
by Hannah J. Hessel

In a world of storytelling and, more specifically, in the world of Rebecca Taichman’s production of *The Winter’s Tale*, the characters’ journeys are heightened through the director’s craft of theatrical yarn-spinning, weaving Shakespeare’s story into an intricate tapestry. Her choice to have actors playing multiple parts heightens the already prevalent theme of transformation. Changing seasons, as in the play’s title, provide one thread of transformation. Aging, as our bodies warp over the course of time, provides another. The play’s setting likewise moves from the cold urbane world of Sicilia to the lush rural Bohemia. This duality of place allows the differences to show in stark relief, illuminating the characters’ journeys.

Perhaps the most radical of Taichman’s choices in this production is her decision to have the same performer play both the jealous king Leontes and the conniving rogue Autolycus. This specific doubling is rare, perhaps because doing so is logistically complicated as the actor has to make changes with sometimes rapid speed. At a glance, the characters feel very different, but they are actually opposing sides of a single coin. Where Leontes seeks out the truth but is unable to see it, Autolycus understands the truth but prefers to manipulate others with lies. The two characters reflect off of each other so well, in fact, that one may wonder if Shakespeare intended them to be played in that way. The scenes are structured so that watching Autolycus helps audiences engage differently with Leontes when the action returns to Sicilia. As the action moves forward from one character to another, the emotions shift, allowing the play’s resolution to unfold. As the play reaches its end and the truth is unveiled, we see how both men, the purposeful and mistaken liars, have had their previous
states exchanged. Their transformations allow us to share in the profound moment of Leontes’ discovery, and understand that despite his unnecessary villainy there is room for his second chance.

When actors play two roles, the audience is always aware of the duality, which may affect their understanding of the characters. As the younger child of Leontes and Hermione, Perdita (whose name means “lost”) becomes the second chance at resolving the loss of the infant son Mamillius. One child is bound to the painful past, while the other grows up in Bohemia without knowledge of what has come before. Of course, the audience carries the past with them and knows that when those in Sicilia see her face, they will remember too. The transformation from one child to the other is facilitated by Taichman’s choice to cast one performer as both children, in addition to taking on a third linking role, that of Time. Speaking of the passing of 16 years, Time reminds us of the awful couplings of life—birth and death, youth and old age. With time moving forward, tragedy can be replaced by the springtime of youth.

Of the family, it is only the actress playing Hermione who maintains a single character. And yet, her multiple physical manifestations—as human, as ghost, as a work of art—exist only in the perception of others. She is introduced to the audience as maternal and loving and as her husband’s accusations hit she maintains her warm dignity. Yet, in Bohemia, Antigonus reports witnessing Hermione’s sorrowful ghost looking out for her daughter. After the scene returns to Sicilia, Hermione shows the audience that she is at once impervious to and reflective of the passage of time, physically aging while remaining bound to her new frozen form. Upon her reanimation there is little text for her, which may show an internal care not to be shared with the audience. It also shows the end of winter, a slow thawing into a renewed spring.

Hannah J. Hessel, STC’s Audience Enrichment Manager, is in her second season at STC and holds an MFA in Dramaturgy from Columbia University.
Nico Muhly, composer of film scores, classical music and operas, is no stranger to theatre. He wrote a paper about the costume design in *The Winter’s Tale* while studying English at Columbia University—simultaneously with Composition at Juilliard—and last year composed the music for a production of Tony Kushner’s *The Illusion* at Signature Theatre in New York City. So when Rebecca Taichman, Muhly’s collaborator on the chamber opera *Dark Sisters*, brought up her production of *The Winter’s Tale*, he immediately responded, “That’s the one where she comes back to life.”

Muhly has worked closely with Taichman and Set Designer Christine Jones to shape compositions for *The Winter’s Tale* with Hermione’s transformation in mind. “I knew I had to build the whole piece around that moment,” Muhly said. “Everything has to lead to that.” Having composed a wide scope of work for ensembles, soloists and organizations including the Boston Pops, New York Philharmonic and Paris Opéra Ballet, Muhly is seasoned in projects that combine music and story. He has also lent his skills as performer, arranger and conductor to contemporary artists such as Jónsi of the band Sigur Rós, Björk and Usher.

“This is one of those delicious Shakespeare plays that takes place in two distinct locations,” Muhly said. He believes the geography of *The Winter’s Tale* imposes its structure on every piece of the production. “The musical languages for Sicilia and Bohemia are totally different.” Sicilia, for example, is baroque and stylized, while the music from Bohemia has a folksong feel. As he began to interpret the piece musically, Muhly said he “didn’t want to be too literal” and drew inspiration from influences as far-flung as Transylvanian wedding music and Benjamin Britten’s opera version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

By incorporating live musicians into the production, Muhly has given the compositions and the show a chance to metamorphose together. “It’s not just a needle drop thing. As performances deepen, the music will change along with the production,” Muhly said. “I think it’s going to be fun.”

**Kate Colwell** is the Communications Intern for STC’s 2012-2013 Season. She is making her way through the world with a love for *Avenue Q* and a B.A. in English from the University of Virginia.
2013-2014 Season
From the Desk of Michael Kahn,
STC Artistic Director

This season’s plays explored Russian politics, heroes/traitors and even a bit of magic. Next season will venture into a collection of powerful classics, sharp comedies and expert directors.

We begin with Measure for Measure, an intricate play returning to our stage for the first time in 20 years. Jonathan Munby reinvented The Dog and the Manger for our audiences in 2009 and is the perfect match to take on this multifaceted Shakespearean production.

I am pleased to welcome to our stage A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum by one of the greatest composers of our time, Stephen Sondheim. Directed by STC Associate Director Alan Paul, the musical combines the excellence of classical theatre with the hilarious fare of a Broadway show. Alan will be making his STC mainstage debut after directing well-received opera pieces for local companies.

Oscar Wilde’s biting wit returns to STC in his riotous comedy, The Importance of Being Earnest directed by Keith Baxter. Keith is a master of Wilde’s work and has staged beautiful productions with us such as An Ideal Husband.

I’m thrilled to be directing Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2 for the Clarice Smith Repertory Series. I have wanted to do these plays in their entirety for many years. When Stacy Keach contacted me about playing Falstaff, I knew it was the right time to do it. Stacy is an accomplished Shakespearean actor, whose performance will do justice to this celebrated character.

Noël Coward’s Private Lives, directed by Maria Aitken, will conclude our season. Coward is one of the best English playwrights of the 20th century and Maria is known for her masterful work on his plays both onstage and off.

Each of these featured playwrights is a master of their genre, and the works that we present played pivotal parts in their artistic careers. I hope you will join us for this season of true theatrical excellence.
## Creative Conversations

Join the FREE exchange of ideas! STC’s Creative Conversations give our audiences the chance to connect deeply with the work on stage. Whether you are interested in historical background, creative points of view or voicing your own experiences, we have a discussion for you.

### Page and Stage (Formerly Windows)
**FREE**
**Sunday, May 19, 5–6 p.m.**
Lansburgh Theatre Lobby
Hear insights on creating the production from the artistic team and local scholars during this lively event.

### Classics in Context
**FREE**
**Saturday, June 8, 5–6 p.m.**
Lansburgh Theatre Lobby
Respond to the onstage production in a roundtable format with savvy theatre panelists.

### Bookends
**FREE**
**Wednesday, May 22**
5:30 p.m. and post-show
Lansburgh Theatre Lobby
Explore the production with this immersive discussion event. Pre- and post-show discussions give complete access into the world of the play.

### Post-Performance Cast Discussion
**FREE**
**Wednesday, June 19, post-show**
Lansburgh Theatre
Extend the experience. Talk with the acting company after viewing the production.

For more information, visit [ShakespeareTheatre.org/Education](http://ShakespeareTheatre.org/Education).