David Ives’s

the

metromaniacs

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY

FIRST FOLIO

Teacher and Student Resource Guide
Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this First Folio: Teacher and Student Resource Guide will prove useful to you while preparing to attend The Metromaniacs.

First Folio provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. First Folio contains material about the playwrights, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance.

First Folio is designed as a resource both for teachers and students. All Folio activities meet the “Vocabulary Acquisition and Use” and “Knowledge of Language” requirements for the grades 8-12 Common Core English Language Arts Standards. We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

The First Folio Teacher and Student Resource Guide for the 2014-2015 Season was developed by the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department:

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ACT ONE

Midsummer’s Day, 1738. The ballroom of Monsieur Francalou’s house in Paris has been decorated to look like a forest. Francalou explains to his maid, Lisette, that he intends to put on a play in the ballroom. He will attempt to inspire his daughter, Lucille, to choose a husband from the hundred eligible young men who are in attendance. Francalou has published some poems under a woman’s name, “Meriadec de Peaudoncqville,” and become a darling of the critics. No one knows the real identity of the Meriadec, and one young poet named Damis has actually declared his love for “her” through more poems published in a literary magazine.

Mondor, servant to Damis, arrives in search of his master. He discovers that Damis has been staying at Francalou’s house under the name of “Cosmo de Cosmos.” Damis wants to go off in search of his beloved Meriadec, but Mondor points out that they are broke. Damis promises that his play, *The Shepherd’s Fez*, premiering that night at the Comédie Française, will be a hit. To keep Damis from leaving, Mondor lies and tells him that Meriadec is there, in Francalou’s house...in disguise.

Dorante, a young gentleman, meets Lisette in the ballroom and declares his love for Francalou’s daughter, Lucille. Lucille herself arrives and reveals that she has fallen in love with Damis – who she’s never met, but has read his poems in a magazine. When she leaves, Lisette advises the forlorn Dorante that the way to win Lucille’s heart is to write poetry. Unfortunately, he’s a terrible writer. Lisette agrees to help him.

Dorante and Damis, old friends, run into each other. Damis writes a poem for Dorante to give to his lover. They both discuss their passionate love for a mystery girl, and Dorante suspects that Damis is in love with Lucille also. Dorante asks Damis to introduce him to Francalou. However, he must keep his identity secret because Francalou and Dorante’s father are sworn enemies, so Dorante introduces himself as “Eraste” and agrees to be in Francalou’s play that night.

Francalou confirms for Cosmo/Damis that Meriadec is staying in the house. (We know, of course, that Francalou IS Meriadec. And Damis is still disguised as “Cosmo.”) Mondor tells Damis that his uncle, Judge Baliveau, has arrived in town to force Damis to abandon his life as a poet and study law. Damis is sure that when his play premiere is a success, his uncle will approve.
Baliveau arrives at Francalou’s house in search of his nephew. Francalou agrees to help Baliveau find Damis by sending “Cosmo” to search for him. In return, Baliveau must play an angry uncle in Francalou’s play.

Lisette suggests to Francalou that Cosmo/Damis would make a good husband for Lucille and criticizes Eraste/Dorante. Dorante overhears and is furious, but Lisette explains that Lucille will want him more if her father disapproves. Lucille enters and Lisette sets her up for a rendezvous with Eraste/Dorante, convincing her that Dorante is the same man that wrote the poems in the magazine. Though confused when Lucille calls him Damis, Dorante declares his love for her. She invites him to join her behind a tree in the “forest.” Dorante accuses Lisette of sabotaging him and then joins Lucille. Angry, she decides that she will get revenge on him.

Speaking with Francalou, Damis comes to believe that Lucille is the real Meriadec de Peaudoncqville. Lisette dresses up as Lucille for the play and encounters Damis, who believes she is the real Lucille and professes his love to her. Lisette plays along. Francalou arrives and also thinks Lisette is Lucille; he blesses the match between “Lucille” and “Cosmo.”

On his way out, Damis drops his notebook and Mondor picks it up. The real Lucille and Dorante return and hear Mondor reading from the notebook. Mondor accuses Dorante of being a fake – not really Damis as Lucille thinks. Dorante admits that he is not Damis. Seeing the notebook, Lucille thinks that Mondor is the real Damis and invites him behind a tree, leaving Dorante behind.

ACT TWO
Cosmo/Damis and his uncle Baliveau rehearse their roles in Francalou’s play. Finally, Damis unmasks, revealing his identity to his uncle. Baliveau tries to convince Damis to settle down and study law, but Damis refuses. He makes a bet that his play will be a success: if he wins, he can be a poet; if he loses, he will study law. Baliveau secretly plots to sabotage the premiere.

Thinking he has seen Damis and Lucille together, Dorante challenges Damis to a duel. Mondor and the real Lucille enter. Damis demands that Lucille tell Dorante they are in love, but Lucille has no idea who Damis is. She still believes Mondor is her poet-love; Mondor has told her that he is Bouillabaisse, author of The Shepherd’s Fez. Fed up with the confusion, Eraste/Dorante tells Francalou that he loves Lucille and demands to marry her. Cosmo/Damis then reveals Dorante’s true identity and Francalou is furious. Lisette (still disguised as Lucille) enters and announces that everyone has gone to see the premiere at the Comédie Française. Dorante professes his love to Lucille/Lisette, unaware that the real Lucille has arrived to overhear. Lisette and Mondor reveal their true identities, but Lucille remains indifferent to Dorante, saying she couldn’t marry him without her father’s approval. Baliveau offers to help settle the dispute between Francalou and Dorante’s father, enabling Dorante to marry Lucille. In exchange, Dorante must sabotage Damis’ play premiere.

Later that night: Damis’s play is a flop. Baliveau reveals to Francalou that Cosmo is really Damis. To satisfy Baliveau’s anger and save Damis from studying law, Francalou proposes that Damis and Lucille marry. More mistaken identities are cleared up, and Lucille declares that she loves Dorante, not Damis. A letter arrives from Dorante’s father apologizing to Francalou, and finally Francalou accepts the match between Lucille and Dorante. Another letter arrives from Baliveau’s ex-wife, revealing that Mondor is Baliveau’s son. Damis is content to pine for his Meriadec...until Francalou reveals that he is Meriadec.
WHO’S WHO in *The Metromaniacs*

**Damis**
- Also known as: Cosmo de Cosmos
- Pen name: Bouillabaïse
- Nephew of Baliveau
- A poet
- In love with Meriadec

**Mondor**
- Mistaken for Damis/Bouillabaïse
- Servant to Damis
- Also plays a servant in Francalou’s play

**Dorante**
- Also known as: Eraste
- Dorante (the character in Francalou’s play)
- Mistaken for Damis
- Son of Francalou’s enemy
- Friend of Damis
- In love with Lucille

**Lisette**
- Mistaken for Lucille/Meriadec de Peaudoncqville
- Maid to Lucille

**Francalou**
- Pen name: Meriadec de Peaudoncqville
- Father of Lucille
- Owner of the house where the play is set
- Publishes poetry under a woman’s name: “Meriadec de Peaudoncqville”

**Lucille**
- Mistaken for Meriadec de Peaudoncqville
- Daughter of Francalou
- In love with poetry/poets

**Baliveau**
- Also known as: Signor Pirandello
- Uncle to Damis
- A judge

**Meriadec de Peaudoncqville**
- A false identity created by Francalou to publish his poetry
- The characters believe Meriadec is a real woman, but she is completely made up
WHO’S WHO in The Metromaniacs

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

FRANCALOU  Fraynk-a-loo
LISETTE  Lee-zett
MONDOR  Mahn-dorr
DAMIS  Dah-mee
DORANTE  Dor-ahnt
BALIVEAU  Bal-a-voe
MERIADEC  Mair-ya-deck
PEAUDONCQVILLE  Po-dunk-veel

BOUILLABAISSE  Bool-yuh-bezz
COMEDIE  Ko-may-dee
FRANCAISE  Frahn-sezz
MELPOMENE  Mel-pom-a-nee
ST. SULPICE  Sann-syool-peece

KEY

- In love with...
- Existing relationship

- uncle/nephew
- friends
- long-lost father/son
- master/servant
- master/maid
- father/daughter
DAVID IVES

There are few playwrights who love language as much as David Ives. “I think everything should be in verse,” Ives has said. “The New York Times and cookbooks should be in verse. Verse raises the level.”

Born in Chicago in 1950, Ives entered Yale School of Drama in 1981, where he began bending the world to his inimitable rhythms. New York magazine once named him one of the 100 smartest New Yorkers, a distinction he has called the greatest tragedy of his life.

All in the Timing (1993), a breakneck evening of witty dialogue, ran for over 600 performances off-Broadway. In 1995-1996, it was the most-performed play in the country. In 2013-2014, Ives repeated this coup with Venus in Fur, his Tony Award-Nominated play, which Roman Polanski turned into a film. He is currently collaborating with Stephen Sondheim on a much-anticipated musical based on two films of Luis Buñuel.

All of which makes his comfort in the classical theatre—and his facility with verse—even more impressive. The Liar and The Heir Apparent, Ives’s rhymed-verse translations of French comedy for STC, have quickly become industry standards, and he credits working in this form with transforming his experience of reality. “Once I started working in verse,” Ives says, “I would walk down the streets and translate bus ads into verse, just to see how they’d sound. Know what? Bus ads are always better in iambic pentameter.” One could say the same of French comedies. They always sound better in Ives.

ALEXIS PIRON

One of the most widely produced comic writers of the 18th century, Alexis Piron (1689-1773) lived a life dogged by controversy. He had an uncanny ability to make powerful enemies and as a result, he is all but forgotten today.

Born in Burgundy in 1689, Piron moved to Paris in the early 1720s, eager to be a poet. But instead of garnering glory at the Comédie Française – the theatre of King Louis XV – Piron worked at Paris’ unofficial fairground theatres. At these théâtres de la foire, Parisians came to have a naughty good time, classical decorum be damned. Arlequin Deucalion (1722), an ingenious dramatic monologue sprinkled with satirical jabs at contemporary authors and actors, established Piron as an anarchic, dangerous wit.

In 1738, Piron produced his masterpiece, at, of all places, the Comédie Française. Inspired by a real-life literary scandal involving Voltaire, La Métromanie brings the literary pretensions of the ruling classes down to the parterre of public opinion. The play was a popular success, and one that Voltaire would not forget.

Piron was nominated to the Académie Française (of which Voltaire was a member) in 1753. Citing his artistic improprieties, Louis XV vetoed him. Though he lived a long life of material comfort, Piron never again wrote for the Comédie Française. For his epitaph in 1776, Piron wrote his final, and most famous, couplet:

Ci-gît Piron, qui ne fut rien
Pas même académicien.

As David Ives translates it:

Here lies Piron, a nothing, an anatomy.
He couldn’t even make the French Academy.
By David Ives

Frankly, I fell in love with the title. Having enjoyed myself enormously adapting two French comedies of the 17th and 18th centuries for Michael Kahn and the Shakespeare Theatre Center, I was casting around for a third. In the course of reading in and about that period, I stumbled again and again upon mention of an obscure play from 1738 with a superb title: *La Métromanie*. It means, more or less, *The Poetry Craze*. ("Metro" from “metrum,” Latin for poetic verse, and “mania” from… Oh, never mind.) As it happens, Drew Lichtenberg, STC’s omniliterate literary manager, had noticed the title as well: potentially a real find for STC’s wonderful ReDiscovery series, dedicated to bringing to light classic plays that had remained too long in undeserving darkness. It was via the ReDiscovery series that Michael and I had developed our two previous happy collaborations, *The Liar* and *The Heir Apparent*.

So I ordered the French text from the Internet and it arrived in a blurry offprint of an 1897 edition with an English introduction by a huffy scholar who heartily disapproved of the play and all its characters. Now I was interested. When I read that the play’s author, one Alexis Piron, had failed to make the Académie Française because he’d written a lengthy poetic Ode to a particular part of the body, I was really interested. So what kind of play did he write?

A very chaste and wonderfully delightful one. Upon inspection *La Métromanie* turned out to be a farce based on a brilliant idea, if given sometimes to long-winded declamations on Art. Its world is the airy, unmoored, Watteau-ish one that Piron’s contemporary Marivaux would also put onstage. There’s not much like realism in *The Metromaniacs*. We’re in a levitated reality that’s the exact counterpart of the vernacular, set-in-an-inn comedies the English were writing at the same time. This is champagne, not ale. Since it’s about people who are mad for poetry, champagne is apropos, as is the fact that it’s in verse. To dump this delicate play into prose would be to clip the wings of Pegasus and harness him to a plow.
The play was a lip-smacking scandal in its time, spinning into art what had been real-life comedy. It seems that all Paris had fallen in love with the poems of one Mademoiselle Malcrais de La Vigne, a mysterious poetess from distant Brittany (read: Appalachia). The celebrated satirist Voltaire publicly declared his love for the lady and her great works, only to have it revealed that Mlle de La Vigne was a guy named Paul Desforges-Maillard, very much living in Paris and taking his revenge on the poetry establishment for not appreciating his genius. Needless to say, Voltaire wasn’t pleased when Piron’s satire showed up (and showed him up). Worse than that, the show was a hit.

The premise was comic gold. The structural mechanics, I have to confess, turned out to be something else. Piron was a wit and a poet but not much of what I’d call a farcifactor, often content to let his characters intone his ravishing couplets without paying much attention to who just exited where or why anybody’s doing anything. Besides those fatal disquisitions on Art, the play had not one but two male leads, a lackluster female ingénue and, like so many French plays of the period, it simply came to a stop rather than resolving. This is all by way of saying I’ve fiddled a good deal with Piron’s masterpiece in bringing it into English. (The first English version ever, to my knowledge, but I’m open to correction).

When my friends ask me what it’s about, I always say that The Metromaniacs is a comedy with five plots, none of them important. On the other hand, that’s the beauty of the play, its purpose and part of the source of its delight. We go to certain plays to inhabit a world elsewhere, and La Métromanie is that kind of play in spades. Piron doesn’t want plot. He wants gossamer and gorgeousness, he wants rarified air and helpless high-comic passion. A purer world. Characters drunk on language, fools in love with love. In other words, the way the world was meant to be.

Given what’s in our newspapers day by day, a few yards of gossamer may be just what the doctor ordered. So gossam on, mes amis, gossam on…
Alexis Piron’s play about metromania, the obsession with writing verse, with its plot about poets and playwrights, also has a lot to tell us about theatre and literature, and their links with the real world. Born in 1689 in Dijon, Piron, like all aspiring writers at the time, relocated to Paris, where he began his theatrical career in 1722 writing inventive comedies for the popular theatres that operated at the big Parisian fairs. He also quickly became famous throughout Paris as the foremost epigrammatist and sharpest crafter of bon mots. Rather like Oscar Wilde or Noël Coward, Piron made many friends and enemies—and crafted a formidable celebrity for himself—with his wit. In 1728 he had fulfilled the ambition of all dramatists of the time by having his first high comedy performed by the prestigious Théâtre Français, the direct ancestor of the modern Comédie Française. Of course, it was tragedy that was the most respected form at the time, so it is unsurprising that he decided to try his luck at that too. The results were mixed: his first, produced in 1730, was a relative failure, but he scored a major hit in 1733 with Gustave Wasa, which became one of the most successful tragedies of its age. He had a similarly mixed reception with a double bill consisting of a short comedy and a pastorale in 1734: the pastorale was well received, but the comedy, as Piron had guessed in advance, was judged a disaster. He invited his friends as they left the theatre to kiss him on one cheek and slap him on the other.

In 1729 an event occurred that caused significant excitement in French literary circles: the Mercure de France began publishing verse by the female poet Antoinette Malcrais de La Vigne, who would eventually become known as “the Breton muse.” Although she was far from the first female French writer, the event was still unusual enough to attract attention, and a number of important authors of the time expressed admiration for her, including—most famously—Voltaire. Indeed, in 1732 he went as far as to publish a poem in praise of her which stopped short of including a declaration of love. In due course the truth was revealed: the poetess was the invention of Paul Desorges-Maillard, who had adopted his female alter ego in order to achieve a degree of fame that had been denied him as a mere man. On discovering this Voltaire tried to save face, writing to Desorges-Maillard in February 1735 that this change of sex had not altered his admiration at all. A subsequent recommendation to reserve poetry for his spare time contradicts this.
For Alexis Piron, this was too good a story to ignore. Much of Piron’s poetry takes the form of satirical epigrams, and one of his more endearing features being that he did not seem to care whom he upset, he cast his satirical net wide. So, even though Voltaire-baiting was a favorite sport, his interest in the incident of the Breton muse was clearly inspired by the discomfiture of all the participants, Voltaire included. What is more unusual for Piron is that he chose to weave the story into a play, rather than simply writing a satirical poem about it, and that the play is very far from a straightforward retelling of the actual events. However, Voltaire’s correspondence reveals that this did not stop him identifying himself as the principal object of Piron’s satire.

In the play, would-be poet Francaleu (Francalou in David Ives’s translation), adopts the alter ego of “Mlle Mériaudec de Kersic from Quimper” to publish his poetry. Bretons were a comic cliché in Piron’s time, for exactly the reasons given by David Ives – they are “hicks who live in the sticks.” The comedy of the name chosen by Piron, which resides in its harsh Breton sounds, is rather lost in translation. Hence David Ives’s change to “Meriadec de Peaudoncqville,” which is similarly outrageous for an English-speaking public.

Judging from the historical narrative, we might assume that Francaleu represents Desforges-Maillard, while Damis, the admirer of his female avatar, is Voltaire. And yet this does not always work. Like Voltaire, Damis adopted a pseudonym, “M. de L’Empyrée” (Ives’s “Cosmo de Cosmos” picks up the celestial associations of the original), Francaleu has the equally Voltairean characteristic of subjecting others to readings of his work – Voltaire regaled visitors to his home to virtually non-stop readings and performances, mostly of his own works, whether they liked it or not. Francaleu has also written a tragedy in six acts, “The Death of Bucephalus/La Mort de Bucéphale.” There is more than one joke here: first, for an eighteenth-century audience this is a tragedy about the death of a horse. Second, it was an accepted principal at the time that all tragedies had five acts; the idea of a tragedy with six is funny because more than five suggests the tedium of something that does not know when to stop. Third, Piron is taking another shot at Voltaire, and his similarly titled three-act tragedy La Mort de César. A modern audience cannot, of course, be expected to spot these topical references, so David Ives compensates by making Francalou’s work “a dirge in seven acts.”

However, Voltaire is not the only person we will find echoes of in the play. Damis, the character most identified with Voltaire, is struggling to choose between poetry and the law, a choice made by Piron himself; Damis’ beautifully realized portrait of an author who realizes before his play is performed that it will be a flop surely represents Piron’s own experience. We can also point to a comment made by Damis’ servant in the original text that he is likely to fall into a ditch while reciting poetry as an allusion to an accident that Piron, whose eyesight was very weak, suffered on the estate of his wealthy patron the Comte de Livry. We might also think of Piron when Damis criticizes Francaleu’s comedy L’Indolente for having too many plot lines, in violation of neoclassical rules dictating the unity of action. Of course, if we wish to identify a real-life example of a play with three plotlines, the most likely candidate is La Métromanie itself, an unusually complex comedy for the period.

**Derek Connolly** is Professor of French at Swansea University. He is the author of a monograph on the theater of Piron, *Identity and Transformation in the Plays of Alexis Piron*, and of critical editions of four of his plays for the Parisian fairs. He has also published two monographs on the *philosophe* Diderot, *Innovation and Renewal* and *Diderot’s Endgames*, and, with harpsichordist and musicologist Jane Clark, *The Mirror of Human Life: Reflections on François Couperin’s “Pièces de Clavecin.”* He has published a number of academic articles on French theater from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries and is currently General Editor of the *Modern Language Review*. 
Classroom Activities

Help Wanted

1.) Explain to the students that one of the themes of *The Metromaniacs* is that people often create attractive personas in order to deal with their shortcomings. Define “pseudonym” (a fake name used by an author to conceal his identity) and “alter ego” (another personality for oneself) for the class. Because the characters in *The Metromaniacs* create pseudonyms anonymously, they get into trouble (with comedic effect) when this confuses the other people around them.

2.) Have students write a help wanted or personal ad for something they might need in their actual life. Have the students write the truth for the most part, but have them include ONE lie or exaggeration about themselves that would make the ad more attractive to the reader.

3.) Once students are done writing, take volunteers to read their ads out loud. See if their classmates can identify the lie or exaggeration. Discuss with the students the comic implications of what would happen if someone answered this ad in real life.

Literary Genius

If you listen closely to *The Metromaniacs*, you'll hear many of the same words you might hear in English class. David Ives peppers his verses with literary terms, making jokes about writers, poets, and even his own play. See if you know any of the following words, and match them up with the correct definition. Look up the terms if they are unfamiliar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eclogue</th>
<th>A foot in poetic meter.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nom de plume</strong></td>
<td>A wild choral hymn, dedicated to the Greek god Dionysus; a passionate speech or poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophes</td>
<td>A short poem, especially a pastoral dialogue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Villanelles</td>
<td>A poem or book dealing with rural topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundelay</td>
<td>A Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven and five.</td>
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<td>Limerick</td>
<td>A humorous, frequently bawdy, verse of three long and two short rhyming lines.</td>
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<td>A short simple song with a refrain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dithyramb</td>
<td>The first section of a Greek choral ode. A structural division of a poem containing stanzas of varying line-lengths.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dactyl</td>
<td>A poem of fixed form nineteen-line poem with two rhymes and repeated refrains.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classroom Activities

Rhyming Mad Libs

1.) Define “metromaniac” for the students—a person addicted to poetry or to writing verses. Explain that verse or poetry has a meter and that verse often rhymes. Tell the students that *The Metromaniacs* is written entirely in rhyming couplets—a verse device where two lines rhyme.

2.) Hand out this “Rhyming Mad Libs” worksheet to students. Have students fill in the passage from *The Metromaniacs* trying to keep the rhythm and the rhymes throughout.

3.) Once students are done writing, take volunteers to read their verses out loud. See how many different rhymes they could find for each missing couplet.

__________________________

*Mondor describing his master to Lisette.*

**MONDOR**
This is the place! My master’s got to be here!

**LISETTE**
Okay. His looks? His hair? His build? His cloak?

**MONDOR**
Oh, you can’t paint ______________ in just one stroke.
Depending on his ______________ or what he’s thinkin’
His looks’ll change without him even blinkin’.
I swear! He’s ______________ one minute, now he’s ______________.
He’s blue-eyed, now he’s brown-eyed, now he’s not.
He works all day but never does a thing.
He’ll pace, he’ll ______________, stand on one leg, he’ll ____________.
And like all human history on one page
He’s every character you’ve seen onstage:
The prince; the fool, or his for-tay, ______________.
Strolling along ______________ with the ______________.
Most of the day he spends inside his ______________ –
His head stuck firmly up his own ______________.
Much of the comedy in *The Metromaniacs* comes from David Ives playing with anachronistic language. Anachronisms are things that are not in their correct historical time. Ives uses language that we would use today in 2015 but keeps his play set in 1738 Paris, France. Why are anachronisms funny? What are other examples of art that use anachronisms to make people laugh? Why might Ives use anachronisms to tell this particular story?

Why do you think the title is *The Metromaniacs*? How do the characters and plot reflect this title?

Farce is a style of comedy where situations and characters are exaggerated for comedic effect. Farce often includes many entrances and exits, mistaken identity, door slamming, characters hiding to overhear secret information, escalating comedic situations, etc. Identify at least five moments of farce in the play.

*The Metromaniacs* contains many exaggerated characters. How would you define the archetype (jock, ditz, cranky old man, crybaby, etc.) of each character? What is an example of this archetype in a show or movie today? What does each character do that represents this character archetype?

Does this play remind you of any modern movies or shows? What similarities do you see to modern comedies or comedians, such as *Saturday Night Live*, *The Hangover*, Will Ferrell, or Kevin Hart? What are some differences?

Piron wrote his original play to make fun of real life events in France. Do writers still do that today? What are some examples?

David Ives creates rhymes out of many strange words over the course of the play. What is the funniest rhyme? Why do you think so?

Many critics believe that comedy can be the most harsh critique of human behavior. What kinds of people or behaviors might the play be critiquing? Does this play make certain actions seem ridiculous or absurd?

**Key for Literary Genius Activity on Page 12**

- Dactyl: A foot in poetic meter.
- Dithyramb: A wild choral hymn, dedicated to the Greek god Dionysus. A passionate speech or poem.
- Eclogue: A short poem, especially a pastoral dialogue.
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- Haiku: A Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven and five.
- Limerick: A humorous, frequently bawdy, verse of three long and two short rhyming lines.
- Nom de plume: Pen name, literally translated to name of the feather referring to a quill.
- Rhyming Couplets: Two lines of the same length, maintaining a singular thought that end in rhymes.
- Roundelay: A short simple song with a refrain.
- Strophes: The first section of a Greek choral ode. A structural division of a poem containing stanzas of varying line-lengths.
- Verse: Lines written in a metered rhythm.
- Villanelles: A poem of fixed form nineteen-line poem with two rhymes and repeated refrains.
Classroom Activities

I Can Do That! Modernizing a Piece of Classical Text

In David Ives’ new “transladaptation” of Alexis Piron's *La Méromanie*, the language has been updated to resonate with a modern audience. Ives’ use of 21st century language in the play serves as an effective tool for telling the story. See if you can modernize the language in this excerpt from *Much Ado About Nothing* without changing the main ideas that the characters are discussing. Examine the excerpt line by line and update each line of text on its own. Feel free to look up any words or phrases that you are not familiar with. This activity gives you the opportunity to closely examine a classical text and recognize how the ideas contained in it are timeless.

**Claudio**

Thus answer I in name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
’Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love.
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.
Let every eye negotiate for itself
And trust no agent, for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
This is an accident of hourly proof,
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore, Hero.

*(act 2, scene 1)*

Take it one step further: write your updated version in verse.

**Strategies for Close Reading**

When exploring text, it is also helpful to understand paraphrasing and operative words.

- **Paraphrasing** is a good way of making the text more accessible by putting it in your own words.

- **Operative words** are the words that are essential to telling the story. They are the most important words in a line of Shakespeare’s text. Operative words are generally in this order of importance: verbs, nouns (including title and names the first time they are mentioned), adjectives and adverbs.

**Recommended Reading**

Clarke, Jan, “The Material Conditions of Moliere's Stage.”

**Standards of Learning**

The activities and question sequences found in the Folio supports grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

- Understanding of Classical Literature
- Vocabulary and Content Development
- Stagecraft
- Argument and Persuasive Writing
- Inference
- Performance
- Questioning and Listening
- Research
- Analysis and Evaluation
The phrase “theatre etiquette” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:

Before you go:

- *The Metromaniacs* takes place before cell phones and other fun technology existed. Please help us create the environment by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (music, games, etc.). Not only will it be historically inaccurate, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.

- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.

- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

During the performance:

- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.

**Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn**

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it … You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”