

Regarding "The Shakespeare Project"

The Shakespeare Project is an Acting Company made up entirely of members of Actors' Equity Association, dedicated to the exploration of the complete works of William Shakespeare and other playwrights. The group had its genesis as a Special Project of Equity Library Theatre Chicago and currently presents "Theatrical Readings" of the plays of Shakespeare that achieve a clarity usually only accomplished by fully producing the plays. Assembled by *The Shakespeare Project's* Artistic Director, Mara Polster, these exceptionally skilled actors have been seen on the stages of the Shakespeare Repertory, The Goodman, Steppenwolf, The Court Theater, and many other theatres in the Chicago area and around the country.

The Shakespeare Project performed its first public reading in November of 1995. In January of 1996, monthly performances began at The Chicago Cultural Center, at 78 East Washington Street. These readings are presented as a Special Project for Equity Library Theatre. In June of 1996, The Chicago Park District adopted *TSP* as a sponsored organization to present its monthly readings as a survey course with discussion to follow at The Berger Park Cultural Arts Center, 6205 North Sheridan Road. *TSP* will continue performing at both of these locations throughout 1997 and plans to work in a full production or two into the 1998 schedule.

This year, *The Shakespeare Project* presents its 1997 Theatrical Reading Series, entitled "A History of the English Kings (as presented by Elizabethan Dramatists)". We hope you will join us as we take you through eleven of the Elizabethan history plays in chronological order. Next month, we present An apocryphal play entitled *Edward the Third*. All readings begin at 1:00 p.m. and are free to the public. *TSP* is a nonprofit organization and may receive tax-deductible contributions. If you wish, you may send contributions to *The Shakespeare Project*, 2706 North Albany Street, Chicago, Illinois 60647. For further information or to book a reading, contact *TSP* at 773/252-8544. Fax number 773/252-5433. Email address TSPchicago@aol.com.

Regarding ELT

Formed in 1952 to let producers know that a talent pool of actors existed in Chicago, Equity Library Theatre remains the Midwest's only ongoing producer of showcases. ELT is open to any and all members of Actors' Equity Association who are in good standing with that union.

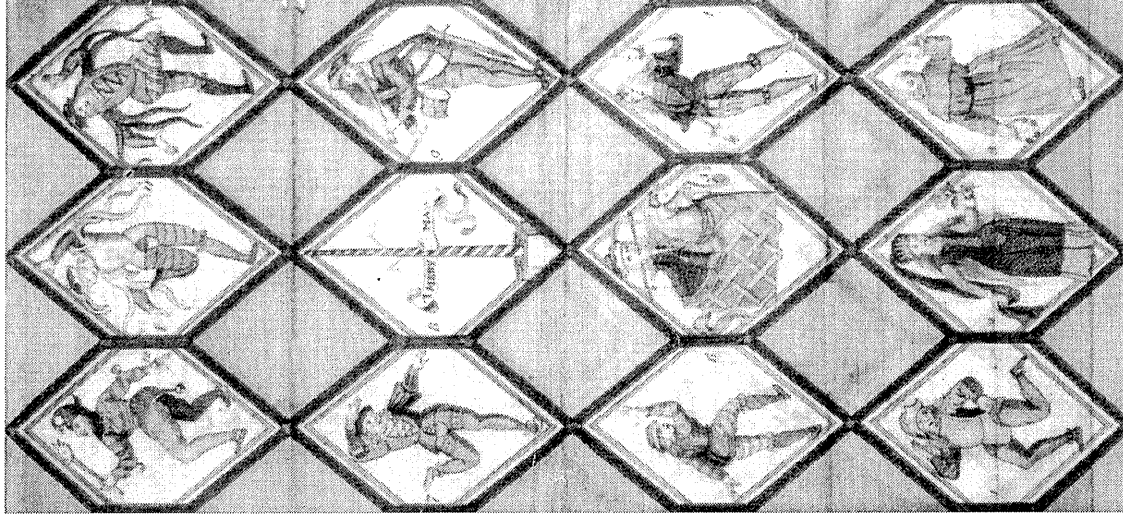
ELT offers performance opportunities to actors in many venues from full performance to staged readings, from scene showcases to various workshops and discussion with visiting artists.

Members are encouraged to bring ideas for new projects to one of four yearly meetings. The Alternative Classic Theatre Project began this way in 1986 and has become one of the most successful ventures ELT has produced. Another was the establishment of *The Shakespeare Project*.

In 1993 ELT became a resident theatre of The Chicago Cultural Center. Each year ELT provides high quality, low cost theatricals to the downtown area; three to four fully produced plays in the Studio Theatre, plus 6-12 one hour presentations in the main theatre on the second floor. Our last production at the CCC was William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and our next production will be in February - Anton Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*.

Equity Library Theatre is a nonprofit organization and as such may receive tax deductible contributions. If you would like to contribute to ELT, please send any contributions to: Treasurer, Equity Library Theatre, 4738 North LaPorte Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60630-3801. A confirmation letter for tax purposes, will be sent by return mail.

The Shakespeare Project presents



A
Theatrical Reading

of

Edward The Second

Directed By: Mara Polster

"The Shakespeare Project" is sponsored by



All of the actors with The Shakespeare Project are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of professional Actors and Stage Managers. All T.S.P. presentations at The Chicago Cultural Center are produced as a Special Project of Equity Library Theatre, for which the actors contribute their talents under a Special Agreement between T.S.P., E.L.T. and A.E.A. All performances at The Berger Park Cultural Arts Center are sponsored by The Chicago Park District.

Good afternoon and welcome to our reading of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward the Second*. This is our second reading, of eleven, in our 1997 Theatrical Reading series *The History of the English Kings*. To recap the historical "dramatis personae" we have encountered so far, I will summarize. (Also, see the family tree in progress on the back page of your program.)

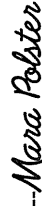
In *The Life and Death of King John*, we became acquainted with **Eleanor of Aquitaine**, the wife of **King Henry II**. We learned of their children, principally **King John**, who was their youngest son. Shakespeare brought to life **King Richard I (Coeur-de-lion)**, John's older brother, by inventing the character of Philip the Bastard, who kept us cognizant of the strength of John's great predecessor. We learned of Henry's third son (deceased) Geoffrey, through his surviving wife Constance and "rightful heir" Arthur. Henry's daughter was represented in the play by her own daughter, Blanche of Spain, whom we saw married to Lewis the Dauphin of France. At the conclusion of *King John*, we witnessed the ascension of **King Henry III**, upon his father's death.

Since we don't tackle dramatizations of the life of the next two kings, here it is in brief. King Henry III, having become king at a very early age, was a somewhat ineffectual king - much like his grandson Edward II. However, his successor and favorite son **King Edward I** did not come to power till the age of 35 (Henry III reigned for 57 years) and was devoted to personal and political integrity. This Edward I, grandson to King John, is the strong and controlling father of today's subject, **Edward the Second**. Edward II, as the first heir apparent to bear the title of "Prince of Wales", is said to have been "idle and frivolous, with no liking for military campaigning or affairs of state." His father, believing that the prince's close friend Piers Gaveston was a "bad influence", banished Gaveston from England. It is said that "On his father's death, Edward II recalled his favorite."

And thus, our play begins. And thus -as is par for the course in Elizabethan historical drama- the firm historical accuracy ends. The actual events depicted in *Edward the Second* took place over the full span of Edward's reign, while Marlowe compresses time and detail for dramatic effect.

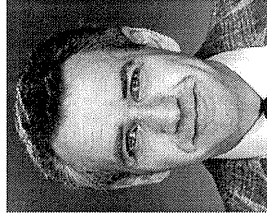
Christopher Marlowe is considered to be the first great English dramatist and the most important before Shakespeare, but his entire playwrighting career lasted only six years. He is reputedly well educated -unlike Shakespeare- apparently well connected politically and allegedly was a secret agent for the government (no kidding). He is said to have held unorthodox religious views, whatever that means, and led an “adventurous and dissolute life”. In 1593 he was denounced as an heretic and before any action could be taken against him, he was stabbed to death in a tavern brawl over payment of a dinner bill.

This is the very Christopher Marlowe we see shouting through in *Edward the Second*. He seems to have shown no fear when he struck pen to ink and paper with this piece of playwrighting. I find the play to be compelling and surprising in its emphasis, yet even more so in its audaciousness. This appears to be a 16th Century Gay-Rights play, with all of the struggle in the play regarding Gaveston (and later Spencer) centering around a general disapproval for the King's relationship and his passionate, love-sick character, and the equally passionate rejection of his wife. The King's brutal execution, although dramatically only implied (and historically not supported), is so brutal and invasive that it brings to mind a very strong statement of the detestation of the homosexual lifestyle - and Marlowe's powerful reaction to that hate. Had Marlowe wanted to write a political play about the weakness of King Edward, he could have easily done so with the actual facts regarding Piers Gaveston and the Scottish Despencers. Instead, he makes a different point altogether. One that is so current to our lives today that it still feels as threatening as it may have in its own time. Yet art prevails, and with this play Christopher Marlowe provided the model for the historical dramas which followed -principally Shakespeare's Richard II through Richard III- and helped to establish blank verse as the predominant form in English drama.





Mary Ringstad (Prince Edward) is pleased to be joining the talents of *The Shakespeare Project*. Although Mary calls Chicago her home, she is really a “road hag” - traveling to wherever the work is. She has performed in theaters all over the country, particularly when she appeared in the national tour of *CATS*. Most recently, she completed a run of *Oklahoma* at Drury Lane Oakbrook. Mary has a MFA in Acting from Ohio University.



Dennis Sook (Warwick *et al*) most recently appeared as a poker player in *The Odd Couple* at Candlelight’s Forum Theatre. He’s glad to be back in Chicago after working in New York for several years, where he appeared in commercials, on the soaps, and Off-Broadway in *New Mexican Rainbow Fishing* and the baseball comedy *A Perfect Diamond*. Dennis was also in the Actors’ Studio production of Tennessee Williams’ *Orpheus Descending*. His career began touring with the National Shakespeare Company for two seasons. Dennis earned his Master of Arts degree from the City College of New York.



Phillip Vanlear (Gaveston) is pleased to be back with *The Shakespeare Project*, (as if he could ever get away). Most recently Phillip was seen on CBS in both *EZ Streets* and *Early Addition*. As the Artistic Director of Fleetweed-Jourdain Theatre, he just opened *And I Ain’t Finished Yet*, and is in rehearsal for *The African Company Presents Richard III*. As an actor he will be appearing in the Victory Gardens’ production of *Root Causes*, and *Playing For Sheetrock* at Lifeline Theatre. He teaches at Act One Studios and runs Public Policy Theatre Company. Most importantly he is the proud father of five beautiful children. Peace.

Mara Polster (Director, Producing Artistic Director) is learning a great deal in the process of directing this reading of Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward the Second*; some about the Elizabethan Playwrights, some about Shakespeare and Marlowe, about Edwards II and III, the universality of our modern gay-rights and other discrimination issues, about herself, and she anticipates also learning some about her audiences. She believes- much to the general discomfort of her friends- that *The Shakespeare Project* is divinely guided. The Project began as a “fire in the belly” and has grown to an object of much pride and promise with little more than imagination and a love of the words (plus a brilliant Acting Company). Mara ran from Ohio in 1982 to **The Webster Conservatory of Theatre Arts and**



Dance in St. Louis, to major in both Acting and Music, while minoring in dance. She has acted on most of the stages here in Chicago (although some still elude her) and many others across the country. Favorite credits include *The Roads to Home*, *Macbeth*, *Our Town*, *Top Girls*, and more musicals than she cares to name. Since May of 1995 *The Shakespeare Project* has enabled her to explore dream roles such as Katherina, Isabella and Paulina, to provide the same opportunity to other actors and to exercise that directing muscle everyone pesters her about. *The Shakespeare Project* exists as the grateful commemoration of two fiercely strong souls, Samuel E. LaMaccchia (the sower of the seed) and Michael A. Wilson.

The Shakespeare Project

Presents

Edward the Second

The Players

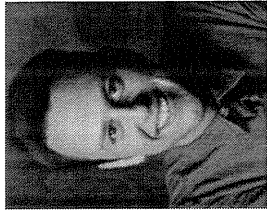
(in order of appearance)

King Edward II.....	Harry Althaus
Gaveston.....	Phillip Vanlear
A Poor Woman.....	Rengin Altay
A Poor Man.....	Norm Boucher
A Poor Man.....	Ron Butts
Lancaster.....	Gary Houston
Mortimer, the elder.....	Gary Raypppy
Mortimer, the younger, his Nephew.....	Peter Garino
Guy, Earl of Warwick.....	Dennis Sook
Edmund, Earl of Kent.....	Jason Eric Hays
Queen Isabella.....	Nancy Nickel
Prince Edward.....	Mary Ringstad
afterwards King Edward the Third	
Bishop of Coventry.....	Joseph Bowen
Archbishop of Canterbury.....	Ron Butts
Servant to the Archbishop of Canterbury.....	Joseph Bowen
Pembroke.....	Joseph Bowen
Young Spencer.....	Norm Boucher
Baldock.....	Ron Butts
King Edward's Niece.....	Rengin Altay
Arundel.....	Ron Butts
Elder Spencer, father to Spencer.....	Gary Raypppy
Levene.....	Rengin Altay
Sir John of Hainault.....	Joseph Bowen
The Abbot.....	Phillip Vanlear
A Mower.....	Gary Raypppy
Rice ap Howell.....	Dennis Sook
Leicester.....	Rengin Altay
Bishop of Winchester.....	Gary Houston
Berkeley.....	Dennis Sook
Matrevis.....	Ron Butts
Gurney.....	Norm Boucher
Lightborn.....	Phillip Vanlear

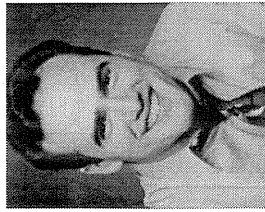
There will be one 10 minute intermission



Rengin Altay (King Edward's Niece, Leicester *et al*) has been seen on many of Chicago's many stages, most recently at the Court Theater in *Carmen*; and also at The Goodman Theater in *Unjustifiable Acts*, *A Little Night Music*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and one performance of *A Touch of the Poet*; Steppenwolf Theater in *Awake and Sing*; Wellington Theater in *A Prelude To A Kiss*, and Victory Gardens, Appletree and Wisdom Bridge Theaters. Regional credits include *All My Sons* & *You Can't Take It With You* at Peninsula Players, *A Christmas Carol* in Milwaukee; *As you Like It* at the Huntington Theater in Boston and Pittsburgh Public Theater and *Arms and the Man* at Madison Rep.



Harry Althaus (King Edward the Second) last appeared at Court Theatre in the *Travels With My Aunt*, as well as 1994-95 productions of *Once in a Lifetime*, *The Misanthrope*, and *Travesties*. Other familiar appearances include his roles in *Richard II* at the Goodman (1994), Cloud 42's *It's Only A Play* (1993), and *A Letter to Harvey Milk* (1994) and *The Lisbon Traviata* (1991) at Bailiwick, for which he received a Jeff Citation and an After Dark Award. Harry is a graduate of Northwestern University, has appeared at the Immediate Theatre, Wisdom Bridge, and the late Body Politic, among others. Currently, he can be found providing parental guidance to his two terriers, Buddy and Pickles.



Norm Boucher (Spencer, *et al*) is glad to continue his association with *The Shakespeare Project*, which began as a Special Project of Equity Library Theatre, of which he is now Co-President of the Board with Jack Hickey. ELT is currently producing *Uncle Vanya* at the Chicago Cultural Center, and will be producing *Hamlet* in April, in which Norm will be playing Claudius. His favorite ELT roles include Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, David in the critically acclaimed *Judevine*, and *Macbeth*. Norm was recently seen promoting Bud Light on Super Bowl Sunday. He would like to dedicate his performance to his best friends, George and Daisy.



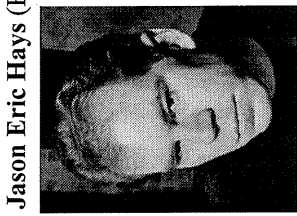
Joseph Bowen (Pembroke, Sir John Hainault, *et al*) relocated to Chicago from Boston a short while back. He has appeared in Shakespeare Project readings of "Pericles", "The Taming of the Shrew" and "The Merchant of Venice" among others. His Chicago credits include "Lonely Planet", "Marisol", and "The Comedy of Errors". Regional credits include "The Boys Next Door", "The Elephant Man" and "Twelfth Night."



Ron Butts (Baldock, Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, Matrevis) has appeared in many of the readings with *The Shakespeare Project* since the spring of 1996. Ron has worked at New American Theater (Rockford), Asolo Theatre (Sarasota), Missouri Repertory (Kansas City), and The Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis). Past roles include Warren G. Harding in *Camping With Henry & Tom*, Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Cowboy in *I'm Not Rappaport*, and Adolphus Cusins in *Major Barbara*.



Peter Garino (Mortimer) For *T.S.P.*: Hubert de Burgh in *King John*, Camillo in *The Winter's Tale*, Banquo in *Macbeth*, Titus Lartius in *Coriolanus*, Lord Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Marc Antony in *Julius Caesar*, Gratiano in *The Merchant of Venice*. Direction: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Pericles*. Other credits include work with Steppenwolf Theatre, Organic Theatre, Body Politic Ensemble, Equity Library Theatre and Oak Park Festival Theatre. Company member: Illinois Shakespeare Festival 1981, 1982, 1984, Hofstra University Shakespeare Festival 1974-77 and National Shakespeare Company Conservatory 1976.



Jason Eric Hays (Edmond, Earl of Kent) is really excited about the work being done by *The Shakespeare Project*. As an aspiring director, the readings are invaluable as a source of inspiration and exploration of the Bard's works. As an actor, they offer a wondrous opportunity to play with Shakespeare's words. He has been with the group for many of its recent projects: *Pericles*, *Macbeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Winter's Tale* and *King John*. Prior to working with *T.S.P.*, Jason had the pleasure of performing at the Stratford Festival in Ontario, and also with Chicago's Shakespeare Repertory. Jason will direct the reading of *Henry V* for *T.S.P.* later this season.



Gary Houston (Lancaster *et al*) appeared in several of *The Shakespeare Project* performances, among them *King John* in the title role and *The Taming of the Shrew* as Petruchio; last season he directed the Project's *The Merchant of Venice*. In January his Illinois Theatre Center production of *Camping With Henry & Tom* won high critical marks, as did his recent acting in Victory Gardens' *Emma's Child* (to be aired on WFMT in April) and in Writers' Theatre Chicago's *Blake*, wherein he portrayed the visionary poet, as well as *Damon*, *Ring & F. Scott* (as Ring Lardner) and *In the Heart of Winter* '96 (as H.L. Hencken).



Nancy Nickel (Queen Isabella) has taken part in many of *The Shakespeare Project*'s readings, recently playing Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*. She has performed at the National Jewish Theatre, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Illinois Theatre Center, and Shakespeare Repertory in their award-winning production of *The Tale of Cymbeline*. In addition, Nancy finds joy working with teenagers in the outreach program for The Jane Adams Resource Corporation. When not speaking in verse, Nancy also enjoys prose.



Gary Rayppy (Elder Mortimer, Elder Spencer) appeared on Broadway as Gratiano in Peter Hall's production of *The Merchant of Venice* with Dustin Hoffman. He spent several seasons at the Guthrie Theatre where he was seen in *Richard III*, *Room Service*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Great Expectations*. Additional regional credits include the dual role of Hugo/Frederic in *Ring Round The Moon*, Felice in Tennessee Williams' *Outcry*, Vladimir in *Waiting For Godot*, and *Richard II*. Last summer he was seen in *The Dresser* at the Apple Tree Theatre, and most recently as Henry Ford in *Camping With Henry and Tom* at the Illinois Theatre Center. Gary is a graduate of the Weber-Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art, London.