



Why Choose Shakespeare | for the Sixth Grade

by Joyce Mycka-Stettler

The act of conquering a seemingly impossible task gives one the confidence and strength to approach new challenges more readily.

Our study of Shakespeare at Hyla in the 6th grade year gives students the opportunity to stretch their minds, muscles, voices, and imaginations. Students enter the world of Shakespeare with varying degrees of familiarity, but all grow in their ability to work together, interpret Shakespearean text, and express themselves through characterization. Whether the student plays Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Curio in *Twelfth Night*, he or she takes on the task of creating anew a character that has been performed for over four centuries, breathing life into a character that first walked the boards during the times of plague, princes, and royal decrees. The prospect of following in the footsteps of Burbage and Olivier or Dench and Thompson is an inspiration in itself. When we discuss the history of Shakespeare on the stage, and when we view productions on video, DVD, or in the theatre itself, we collectively break the bounds of the normal classroom and reach across the centuries for creative inspiration.

The drama program strives to guide students to learn how to tap inspiration in themselves and to work with others creatively. Students take their learning off of the page and into their hearts and minds, they then share insights with their fellow students and are asked to meld ideas to create characters collaboratively. The stories that these characters tell are then shared dramatically with an audience. What students achieve in this collaborative art helps them develop the ability to work with others in context. It is this contextual work with others that we call ensemble; this is the keystone to drama at Hyla.

Ensemble work melds the energies of the individuals and enables them to focus their efforts for the greater good. The individual is not lost in this collaboration, but instead is inextricably linked to every other member of the ensemble, supporting and energizing the whole and all of its parts.



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Thoughts from the Head | Drama and Global Change

What does drama at Hyla have to do with global change? A great deal, if you think about it. In the current anxiety about economic, social, political and environmental change, recycled notions of the so-called 'achievement gap' dominate the current discourse about American education. These revolve primarily around citing

mathematics achievement scores, since they are the most easily understood by the casual consumer of popular news media. This story is not new: it was prominent after the USSR's launch of its Sputnik satellite, it resurfaced during the Reagan era with the report, "A Nation at Risk," and it has been revitalized by noted journalists such as Thomas Friedman in his book, *The World is Flat*. Political leaders have cherry-picked these arguments to redouble state and federal efforts to improve test scores and develop and enforce standards which hold teachers and schools 'accountable'.

Amidst this media-amplified chorus are many dissenters who point out that the United States continues to lead the world in the generation of new patents and licenses. They point to the quantity and diversity of educational institutions and resources which attract increasing numbers of students in higher education from all 50 states and from around the world. These voices argue that the United States is an idea factory made up of thousands of schools, colleges, think-tanks, and informal learning communities, where the culture of teaching and learning is based less on rote memorization of facts and and more on creative and collaborative problem-solving.

Hyla graduates are well-prepared with skills and knowledge for the academic challenges of a college preparatory high school program, but we choose to measure success more deeply. For us, a student's intrinsic growth is more important than increasing test scores. The importance of preparing students for learning and working in an increasingly complex and diverse society is rooted in the many in-depth experiences that Hyla offers which strengthen their resources for problem solving, listening, and creative and honest expression.


Drama at Hyla has always held an integral place in each student's three-year journey into adolescence. This issue of the Hylighter illuminates this journey. In addition to teaching our students about the intrinsic value of theatre, their experience as members of a collaborative creative process informs them as they join the wider ensemble as citizens of their community, our nation, and the planet.

Suggested reading:

"The Mismeasure of Education: Worthy Knowledge in the Age of Globalization."
a blog by Yong Zhao, University Distinguished Professor, Michigan State University.

***Catching Up or Leading the Way*, by Yong Zhao. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD, 2009.**

***A Whole New Mind*, by Daniel Pink. Riverhead Books, 2006.**


Thomas Weber, Head of School

Through the years at Hyla

"The play's the thing"

FIRST FIVE YEARS '93 – '98

Annual holiday shows, plus:

1993-1994 *A Night with Roald Dahl*

1994-1995 *Talking Pictures*

1995-1996 *Oh, What a Time!*

1996-1997 *The Ordinary Princess*

1997-1998 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1998-1999

6th *Twelfth Night*

7th *Appointment with Death*

8th *Ondine*

1999-2000

6th *As You Like It*

7th *The Comics Show*

2000-2001

6th *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

8th *Animal Farm*

2001-2002

6th *Twelfth Night*

8th *"The United States is..."*

2002-2003

6th *As You Like It*

8th *Newsies*

2003-2004

6th *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

8th *Portraits in Courage*

2004-2005

6th *Twelfth Night*

8th *Animal Farm*

2005-2006

6th *As You Like It*

8th *The Crucible*

2006-2007

6th *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

8th *Class Acts*

2007-2008

6th *Twelfth Night*

8th *Twilight Zone*

2008-2009

6th *The Tempest*

8th *Threads*

2009-2010

6th *A Midsummer Night's Dream*



Portraits in Courage 2003 - 2004 8th grade



A Midsummer Night's Dream 2003 - 2004 6th grade



Twelfth Night 2007-2008 8th grade

Why Shakespeare...continued from page 1

This collaboration is not limited to the students. The creative process of mounting a play brings together the talents of students, parents, educators, and alumni. Last year we worked on *The Tempest* for the first time at Hyla. It was an exciting production designed by Josh Lee, a parent, who created nooks and crannies, bridges and beaches, and it was built by many other hard working parents. Grace Salisbury, now a college freshman, designed and constructed a golden reptile brooch for Prospera. The 7th and 8th graders worked with the 6th graders during tech week, nudging them forward, telling stories of their own experience, and bringing new ideas and staging to scenes that take their final shape during this experiential week.

Three years ago, during the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we were faced with a blizzard, complete with power outages and tree-blocked driveways. The students, however, performed the play in pools of light created by innumerable flashlights shining upon the stage. It seems that nothing can stop those of us who set our minds to succeed at Hyla. We join our energies and together our community rises to meet obstacles that are seemingly impossible.

It really is this community spirit that I most value at Hyla. A community created through a common purpose, the nurturing of young people, through close and caring relationships with teachers, who truly value each individual in the Hyla ensemble.

What about improv | with Seventh Graders?

The room is abuzz. Three minutes until class starts. Small groups move, meld, fan out, and then join together again. The students form a circle. Silence. Humming, shaking of arms and legs, opening and closing of mouths, what in the world...? And then two individuals move toward the center of the circle and start a scene, only to be "frozen" by a classmate who seizes the opportunity to replace one of the players and change the direction of the scene. This is improv.

This seemingly effortless series of events that has taken shape over a period of weeks now flows seamlessly from one activity to another. Students focus intently on the challenging work of opening their hearts and minds, of offering and accepting spontaneous ideas while on their feet in front of the class.



The transformation in young adults' lives during 7th grade is astounding. There is a leap from the concrete world into abstract thought that I have the pleasure of witnessing with each student in my care. For one student this "ah-ha" moment happened during our work on neutral masks. The process begins with contemplation of the mask. The student holds the mask in her hand and moves it slowly in the light.

Shadows are created on the pale surface of the mask and as the observer gazes a bit longer she starts to perceive emotion in the peaks and valleys of shadow and light. This object is obviously devoid of emotion, but the student makes the leap into abstract thought. This same student now dons the mask, holding her perceptions in her mind, and immediately creates a character, a character with a new and fresh awareness of the world. The power of free expression of thoughts and emotions is what ignites this change; the kindling for the fire is trust.

We build trust through a process of learning together. The awkward moments contribute as much as the ones that come with ease; without both there is no risk, no gain. We find ourselves reveling in the ideas of others. The simple act of passing an imaginary object can spark a whole new way of viewing a fellow student, and thus put into place the mechanics for building a whole new working relationship.

These are the real and tangible results of our work on improv. Students experience a new way of looking at our world. They see a world filled with possibilities, possibilities that can grow from our own ideas or possibilities that we can build with others, by sharing and shaping ideas together.

Hyla Goes to the Theatre is an extracurricular enrichment program. Students have enjoyed a variety of plays, from Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* to *The Lion King*; from *Romeo and Juliet* to *The Secret in the Wings*. Plays are selected from those running at a variety of theatres, with a mind to those that will delight and challenge our students and help them to develop discerning taste in the arts. The best part of the experience, besides hearing about the excellence of Hyla students as audience members, is the insightful discussion following a performance. On the boat back to the island, students engage in conversations sharing opinions on costumes, sets, and particular performances; there are also lively discussions about the stories told, as well as the choices the director, actors or designers made in any given production. The social scene involved in a Hyla Goes to the Theatre evening is a rich part of the experience. It's an opportunity for students to have a full evening out with friends, schoolmates, and teachers. We are now working on a collaboration to bring plays from the National Theatre in London to Bainbridge.



Class Acts 2006 - 2007 8th grade



The Tempest 2008-2009 6th grade



Improv performance 7th grade

Scripted Plays | in Eighth Grade

Hyla plays, in the 8th grade year, reflect the unique personalities of a particular ensemble, whether they are chosen from the classics or written by the students themselves.

The Comics Show, *The United States is...*, and *Portraits in Courage*, plays written collaboratively by 8th grade students, sprang from historical research and took shape through dialogue that told the stories that gripped our imaginations. Whether we were Batman keeping our world safe, Jenny taking the first bullet at Gettysburg, a loving dad with an affinity toward McCarthyism, FBI professionals, or frightened passengers on an airplane, we told the stories as we saw and felt them, trying to create the same relevancy in the minds of the audience as first crystallized in our own heads when we discovered the relevancy for ourselves.

Writing a play isn't the easiest thing one can do, but we find it ultimately rewarding; and with everyone's creative ideas bouncing freely around the room, there is plenty to capture and put on both the page and on the stage.

Collaboration, an essential component of any successful theatrical endeavor, is paramount to creating a play and then mounting the production. Trust, openness, the ability to put yourself, your ideas, out in the open, for all to see, is essential. Hyla students take this road often and have created exciting plays and performances that are thought-provoking and sometimes bring their audiences to new places, places that they did not expect to leap into during an 8th grade play. I recently met someone who attended our production of *Threads*. They told me that they were taken back by one particular play that focused on war. The moment that gripped them, that brought them to tears, was the closing scene: one character is left onstage, with guitar in hand, singing a simple lament of grief and hope. It is moments like these that we remember, moments that open our eyes and hearts to pause and think about what is important.

The time line on page two illustrates the richness and variety of plays that 8th grade classes have performed at Hyla. Students have embraced the challenging process of rehearsing and performing year after year, whether the play is class created or written by a professional playwright. The discoveries made while working on a play like *Ondine*, a masterpiece by Giraudoux, or Sir Peter Hall's gripping musical adaptation of *Animal Farm*, stem from examination of each character and his or her journey. The play *Newsies* offered a fascinating look into the world of child labor and the corrupt tycoons who shaped the face of capitalism in our great nation. *The Crucible* took us back to the roots of our country and made us question ourselves and our judgments when faced with new and differing ideas.

Questioning ourselves and our perceptions, asking ourselves to move beyond the comfortable and easy, to reach for more than has been imagined, this is what we have asked our Hyla students to do during their work in drama. I like to think that we at Hyla help nurture the kinds of questioning minds that write petitions, stand up to wrongdoing, appreciate fairness and joy, and herald a new world for all.

Many Thanks!

There is no way that these productions could breathe life without the efforts of parents, the excellent Hyla teachers and staff and in particular the collaborative efforts of Kim Trick, Paul Carroll, Melissa Dempsey, Jennifer Williams, Emily Eigen, and Sykie Toles. I offer deep appreciation and thanks to all dear friends and colleagues who have worked collaboratively on making theatre come to life at Hyla. So many parents have been movers and shakers, when I start listing names I realize that I could fill another whole Hyla Highlighter! Here are some of the generous individuals who have given extraordinary amounts of time and creative energy to the drama program.

Daphne and Roger Stewart • Kellie and Pat Elliott • Cyndy and Tom Salisbury • Meghan and Kris Skotheim • Jane-Leslie, Eli, and Tom Backer • Ron Herbst • Patty Rogers • Barb Trafton • Mary Jo and Chris Blazina • Ann Reis • Ed Berschinski • Deb DeVliieger • Deb Baker • Jeff and Tammy Kesler • Christina Brewer • JD and Kathleen Macferran • Janet Knox • Tom Fehsenfeld • Kim Koenig • Ellen Murphy • Susan and Brian Berdan • Kathryn LaFond • George Brooks • Marcie and Dave Gwiazdon • Rusty Regan • Julie and Steve Matthews • Sue Kerrigan • Gail Peters and Roger Midgett • Kevin Fong • Tad Donnan • Dave Curran • Peggy Fish • Jeff Sharp • Valerie Lang • Laura Murphy • Alex Vassiliadis • Nelson Spickard • Janet See • Bill Reddy • Sandy Schubach • Beverly and Scott Glendinning • Joshua Lee • Louise Cullen ~ and the wonderful others who are not named here but are so appreciated.

The Mission of Hyla Middle School

is to create an educational environment in which middle school children are intrigued with learning. This environment is founded on close, caring connections between teachers and students that encourage students to respect and value themselves and others. In this environment, we provide a strong academic program that develops competent, self-reliant problem-solvers. Beyond academics, we strive to help students grow as individuals with integrity.

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Class of 2005

Zack Acker is in the Honors Program at University of Hawaii (Manoa), majoring in bacteriology with a minor in history, and is pre-med. He is concurrently enrolled at UW, taking a distance course in mythology. **Claire Allen** is a first year student at University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver. She is interested in political science, international studies and visual arts. **Kate Barker** is studying at Willamette University in Salem, OR. She's interested in government, international relations and history. **Kevin Brooks** is finishing up his AA at Seattle Central. **Griffin Dunn** is an engineering major at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA where he's rowing for the crew team. **Joe Duprey** is continuing Spanish and starting Chinese at

Oberlin College, OH. He's also teaching reading in a local Headstart program. **Thomas Elliott** is at Santa Clara University in the school of Arts and Sciences. He is uncertain of his major but is humanities heavy this fall. He is getting used to distance running in the warmer climate and hoping to play some intramural sports. **Shane Elliott** is attending Sierra Nevada College at Lake Tahoe, Nevada. He is studying ski business and environmental science. He is considering a minor in outdoor adventure. He has taken up beach volleyball and intramural soccer. He plans to stay at school over the winter break and work at a local ski resort. He is enjoying his time off in the back-country of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. **Thane Fehsenfeld** loves Oberlin and his studies of Asian and world policy and history.

On the side, he is researching Cambodian judicial issues for an NGO and will work as an intern there in January. **Karis Hanson** is at Scripps, CA. She is interested in math and science and continues to take piano lessons. **Donna Horning** is having a fabulous time at Yale. She is dancing hip hop with Danceworks, and taking piano lessons at the Yale School of Music. She has joined the Roosevelt Campus Network and the Yale Democrats. **Will Indvik** is a freshman at USC in Los Angeles, where he is in the School of Arts and Sciences. He is playing lacrosse. **Landon Koenig-Muenster** is studying film and creative writing at Occidental College in LA. **Ryan Kok** worked this summer for a mechanical engineering company developing a system to rebuild a rock retaining wall on Agate Pass that was destroyed during a winter storm. He is attending Olympic College working toward his AA and hopes to transfer to a four-year college. He is interested in criminal justice. **Laetitia Lehman-Pearsall** is at Oberlin College, OH. **Annie Lukins** is studying Russian and taking Brazilian dance at Oberlin College, OH where she lives in a Russian themed house. **Kris Nitsche** is at the University of Idaho in Moscow where he is studying archeology and anthropology, is adjusting to college life and having much fun. **Charlie Reis** is in the 5-yr. Coop Engineering Program at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. In addition to engineering classes, he is continuing to study music and play the piano and the guitar. He also plans to play lacrosse in the spring. **Emily Safford** is currently attending Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. She is majoring in music composition and is thinking of a second major in Spanish (due in part to her early Spanish education at Hyla and to being part of two BOSIA delegations to Nicaragua. An important criteria for Emily, when she was looking for a college,

was to find one with the "Hyla feel," which she has found at Willamette. **Grace Salisbury** is attending Western Washington University. **Kyle Scoble** is attending Occidental College in Los Angeles. He is on their soccer team. He has not declared a major but is interested in the international diplomacy program and he is taking Russian language classes. **Madeline Sheldon** is studying international relations at Scripps University in California, is on the Claremont McKenna/Scripps/Harvey Mudd track team and an intramural inner tube water polo team. **Ben Skotheim** is at Whitman College. He's playing rugby, flag football, and lacrosse this fall. He is still interested in botany but considering a major in Latin American Studies or Spanish. He plans to spend Christmas on the west coast of Mexico at a turtle reserve. **Annie Zuckerman** and three Hyla alums (Madeline, Claire and Karis) left shortly after high school graduation to travel through Europe. Now, Annie is having a great time acclimating to life in the Rocky Mountains. She is at the University of Denver, initially thinking about an education major, and is teaching gymnastics on campus. College life appears to agree with her, and she is anxiously awaiting the first sign of snow.

We were unable to get in touch with all of our 2005 alums, but we wish all of our alumni well in their post-Hyla pursuits. Please stop by to visit if you are in the neighborhood. We like to see you!

Friend us at 'Hyla Bainbridge' on Facebook to stay connected and hear about alumni events!

Hyla Middle School, 7861 Bucklin Hill Road, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110, Ph: (206) 842-5988, www.hylamiddleschool.org. The Hylighter ©2009/10 is published by Hyla Middle School. Fall/Winter 2009. Vol 12, Issue 1. Vicki Jenkins, editor. Thomas Weber, contributing editor. Joyce-Mycka Stettler, contributing writer. Jeanette Alexander, graphic designer. Blue Sky Printing, offset printing.



7861 Bucklin Hill Road • Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Parent Admissions Night

Wednesday
January 13, 2010
7:00-9:00 pm



Family Admissions Open House

Sunday
January 31, 2010
3:00-5:00 pm

