

Naming the Shadows: Theatre as Research

PLAYSCRIPT

This short play is set in a multi-grade 1 to 3 classroom. It is the final minutes of the teacher's after-school cleanup; post a short run production of a condensed and adapted version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Carter, 2008). One of the packing boxes transforms into a shadow puppet theatre and soon we have several locations and situations suggested by the dialogue and the shadows.

The play is primarily the dramatization of research data generated within a scholarly inquiry. How might exploring drama and producing Shakespeare help to build a greater sense of learning and community?

The time is the present.

The script published here takes the smallest of moments from the data to give a glimpse of the learning. We are pleased to have the rare opportunity to publish a full script of a research based drama. Most of the shadows that are embedded in the script were created by the elementary student participants with the guidance of researcher, Amanda Wager, and further participation by the research team. The students were proud to know their work would be seen in places as far away as Australia.

The play may be performed by at least two actors. In our production, one actor played both Mr. Calby and Bottom.

Characters:

Mr. Calby, inspired by the elementary teacher of the class where the research project was based.

Bottom, inspired by Shakespeare's original working class amateur actor. Some lines provided to him may be traced to varied sources of the research.

Shadows

Different voices may be used to represent Students and Family. Characters are given an individual essence. But working within the limits of the box of resources, the play focuses more on giving an overall impression of the learning moments throughout the journey, these include: Student as Oberon, Student as Lion, Student as Bottom, Titania Student, Researching Student, At Home Practicing Student, Granddad, Comforting Parent, and the Principal.

I named many of the shadow characters according to the function, or the original role played in their production, rather than by names as this was an effective way of writing the moments and tracking them through the script.

Workshop Production History:

Naming the Shadows was performed for the original research participants (Vancouver Montessori classroom), the UBC Drama Institute (2009), and three scholarly conferences: the International Drama Education Research Institute (Sydney, AU), Canadian Association for Theatre Research (Ottawa, CA), Canadian Society for the Study of Education (Ottawa, CA) in 2009. The cast in all performances included Jaime Beck, George Belliveau, Graham W. Lea and Amanda Wager.

Workshop Production Credits:

George Belliveau:

Principal Investigator;
Mr. Calby, and Bottom;
Dramaturge.

Amanda Wager:

Student Participant Drama
Coach/Researcher;
Shadow manipulation/design;
Student voices.

Jaime Beck:

Researcher;
Music and Sound Composer;
Student Voices; Musician.

Graham W. Lea:

Researcher;
Stage Manager/Lighting;
Student Voices; Musician.

Donnard R. MacKenzie:

Playwright; Researcher;
Production Coaching.

Ahava Shira:

Researcher.

Students of the research project did the original creation for the shadows used as puppets for this production.

Additional Credits:

Stuart Mathews

Commentary Graphics

Amanda Wager, Graham W. Lea

Research and Development
Photography

Alexander Daust and

Donnard R. MacKenzie

Archive Photography

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Planned Shadows

Research Note: The list that follows is the list as prepared PRIOR to the workshop, and a different reading of the script might generate additional or different shadows.

There is also the potential for interpreting the script with multiple shadow boxes.

We also considered possibly projecting the shadow scene titles as listed throughout the script.

Through photographs, the script that follows shows a large selection of some of the shadow scenes.

Planned Shadows List

Scene	Shadow
1	Box lights up
1	Clown/character on a giant trapeze
1	Rabbit
1	Real stream on stage (using a scarf)
1	Parent and student - looking at internet
1	Box lights out
2	Lines, words "lines, lines, lines"
2	Donkey
2	Small lion w/"roar" coming out
3	Weeping flower in the rain
3	Egg and a whisk
3	Music notes in the air
4	A crown - look through scene 4
4	Dad in China - globe, plane, etc.
5	Boy on playground (playground separate) platform holding a flower
5	Titania with wings
6	Titania, 3 students (build on one)
7	Puck and parent - bedtime at home, book, bed, lamp
7	Box lights off
8	Walking in moonlight, Granddad with donkey ears
9	Lantern on a stick
10	Student with flower
10	Create something - dream scape
11	Plants appear
11	Big LION
13	Airplane crossing the world
13	Student taking bows
15	Sun & moon
16	Bottom & teacher
16	Lots of shadows

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NAMING THE SHADOWS

Playscript by Donnard R. MacKenzie

(Setting: Classroom--final cleaning after a performance run. A few boxes. The text quoted from Shakespeare as part of this play appears in italics.)



(From offstage we hear drumming. From offstage these few lines of text from *Midsummer Night's Dream* are sung. For possible example of melody see the acapella version from Ralph Vaughan Williams. Teacher enters in the song singing with the offstage voices.)

CHORUS

*Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through briar,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire
I do wander everywhere.*

(Perhaps there's a large box which will open up into a shadow screen. Teacher is packing boxes and stacking them. He turns to the audience and speaks directly to them.)

TEACHER

(As the song fades, looking around.)
This is my favourite moment. It's all been said and done. William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as produced by Cedar Springs Primary class.

TEACHER (CONTINUED)

Our class. Our space. All quiet. But for the happy ghosts of what's left. Faces of our audience. Faces of the actors. We were all met here once. I can't believe how well they made paintings for the set. How they learned their lines. How they helped each other. How their parents helped them if they could. So much how. For five performances the wild imaginings of the forest world of Fairies was here. Puck sang his magic. Weddings were celebrated. I've been so lucky again to be here with these primary students. But it's no cakewalk. It's not just a walk on the beach picking up seashells. It's a real mountain to climb. And every time I have come to this moment in my career, I say--Never Again! Tonight I'm going to take a long jog through the forest trail and then sleep until next week. Sleep, perchance to dream.

(The actor switches to play the character from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom. For the purposes of the written script, that switch is represented here by the shadow puppet which only appears at the play's end.)



(Bottom straddles both the shadow world of fairies and dreams and theatre, and the real world. In the presentation, the actor played both distinct characters.)

BOTTOM

Dreaming is it? No one's dreaming now. There's still work to be done. Nick Bottom at your service. In this your hour of need.

TEACHER

But the play is over.

BOTTOM

It's never over. There are always parts to be played, songs to be sung, children still laugh, people still cheer. See and hear the ghosts, the shadows of what's left. A parent whistling and hollering through her teeth. A laughing grandmother from Hong Kong who barely speaks English. Her smile spans oceans and time. Echoes. Hear Charlene finally roaring as the Lion. Oooh, the Lion!

(Overcome as an actor, he roars loudly)
ROARRRRRR!

(Turning to the audience.)
Just me. It's pretend.

TEACHER

I thought I had control of you.

BOTTOM

Not this time my lad.

TEACHER

But--

BOTTOM

--No buts--you can sleep when you tell us what it meant for you, and for your ensemble. Tell us what's left in these shadows.

TEACHER

What's left?

BOTTOM

Do I need Peter Quince to write a prologue for you? What's left? What do the kids take away? Yes there were performances, but it's about the process you understand. That's the grit of the matter.

TEACHER

But you were only in it for the Duke's money.

BOTTOM

I'm in it for love, like you man, like your company of young players.

(Bottom goes to open the large box.)
People who say you have to think outside the box have probably never made a box and learned the magic that they can contain inside the box.

(He gestures for there to be light on the screen and then says dramatically.)

Oh, for a muse of fire!



(The box lights up. Bottom responds with childlike excitement as if waiting for all the shadows that might appear. Perhaps we hear some magic drum and flute sound. There appear images in shadow as described by the student character. The shadows were created by the Grade 1 to 3 participants in the research.)

With help from your students we search into the shadows left from the play. If you peek quickly, you might think, is anyone doing any work?

(SHADOW SCENE: Spinning Pinwheel, to keep it simple. Add what shadows are available. Sound Cue: Rhythmic Click. Perhaps a wheel of fortune like sound.)

BOTTOM (CONTINUED)

Children are running the show! Movement everywhere. Wordwalls; Cue Cards; Fairy Magic; Family Reading; Character Hotseats; Running Lines; Playground Play; Building Community--one word of dialogue at a time. Holy Zeus, what chaos! Round and round the shadows dance.

SCENE 1

CHILD RESEARCHING SHAKESPEARE ON THE NET

STUDENT 3

Look, look, Mom, here's another.



Midsummer Night's Dream on giant trapezes. Wow! They swung in the air in a huge all white room.

(Checking the name carefully)

Peter Brook. Hmm. And, and, look at this picture--Mom--of a different production--real rabbits and a real stream onstage--this play has been done so many ways.



PARENT

Now you have your turn for your production. Casting is all done, and now rehearsals, and then you open.

STUDENT 3

I know, I know! Oooh, look this would be great for my Peter Quince costume.

PARENT

You're so well cast. He was the director of the play within the play. And you like to think about the whole production, like a director.

STUDENT 3

I love learning all about the play.

(The lights of the box go out.)

(Musical effect)

BOTTOM

Now you see! What do the ghosts mean?

SCENE 2

THREE STUDENTS ARE DISCUSSING THEIR ROLES



STUDENT AS OBERON

Look how many lines! I can't do this. It's too much.

STUDENT AS BOTTOM

(Really excited)

I'm cast as Bottom. I get to be a donkey!



STUDENT AS LION

I'm the lion. I don't know if I can do this.

STUDENT AS OBERON

But it's mostly roaring.

STUDENT AS LION

I know, that's the problem. I don't like roaring.
I can't roar. At least not loudly.



STUDENT AS OBERON

You'll be fine.

STUDENT AS BOTTOM

My granddad says you learn it one line at a time.

STUDENT AS LION

But I'll never be able to roar. Really, I get too scared.

STUDENT AS BOTTOM

By the opening, you'll be scaring all the other grade twos with how loud your roars are. Just you wait.

STUDENT AS LION

(She tries to roar, it comes out as a squeaky whisper.)
rrrrroar.

SCENE 3

LANGUAGE PLAY IN THE HOME

(Shadow Box: flowers on a rainy day.
There is a sound of rain. Other shadows as per the text.)



STUDENT

Good Mother, The blue sky flowers weep in the rain.

PARENT

Um yes...did you just make that up?

STUDENT

Shakespeare is my constant good friend, wondrous words.

PARENT

Yonder are the eggs, shall I batter them liquidy yellow?



STUDENT

Oh Mom! Hark thy son doth approach, treat him with smiles.

(They laugh, Shadow lights go out, onstage actor takes focus.)

(MUSIC: Reprise of opening melody.)

BOTTOM

It's just like the playing of music--even after the musician has stopped playing, we can still hear the notes. They live in the air.

TEACHER

Like the play. Yes, the sounds echo and vibrate through each person, I knew that.

BOTTOM

Now you know it again. Down through the ages.

(Pause, to illustrate.)

I'm a character with four hundred years of echoes. That child who played me in this production--she was very good---Good feet placement, a good mover. She moved me. And you know why?

TEACHER

I've a feeling you'll tell me--

BOTTOM

--Because each time she speaks her lines

(Jabbing at the teacher)

--even if they are considerably cut--

TEACHER

We needed to have a running time of well under an hour--

BOTTOM

--Indeed--well my good man, there's lots of good stuff for her.

(Quickly returning to his original point)

And each time she speaks she has a conversation with history. All the actors who have spoken those lines for all of the audiences, and with the writer himself.

TEACHER

Shakespeare? That grade three student is clairvoyant?

BOTTOM

Are you being "ironical" with me good sir?

TEACHER

Well, no, if you mean she enters into a dialogical relationship with the writer and the audience--

BOTTOM

--Ooooh "dialogical". Fifty Quid word for something so simple. Cite your references Master Teacher. Come on, cite them! Put the periods in the right place.

SCENE 4

REAL LIFE STUFF



STUDENT AS EGEUS

My gracious duke, before your grace, I beg the ancient right: The privilege of Athens says I may dispose of her as I might. As she is mine, I give her to Demetrius with my last breath; or, according to our law she goes immediately to her death--



(Reflect seriousness in box and actor)

STUDENT 3

--Hey! He's a big bully.

TEACHER

I think every parent I know wants a good match for their child.



STUDENT 3

But he's just telling her what to do. That's not fair. I'd runaway, I bet.

STUDENT AS EGEUS

But it says death. Like you'd be dead. D-E-A-D!

TEACHER

But what about the other people of the court? What could they do to help?

STUDENT 2

Start a petition. Help her, stand up for her.

TEACHER

Yes, good idea. But you'd need to be very brave.

STUDENT AS EGEUS

'Cause you'd be d-e-a-d.

STUDENT 3

But this would never happen in real life.

TEACHER

Perhaps. Right now we are pretending. But what do you think, does it really happen in life?

BOTTOM

Of course it could! This isn't children dressing up. This is work. This ain't no cake walk.

TEACHER

Yes exactly.

STUDENT 3

I hope in real life my dad comes. He's always away on business in China.

TEACHER

He works hard to support his family.

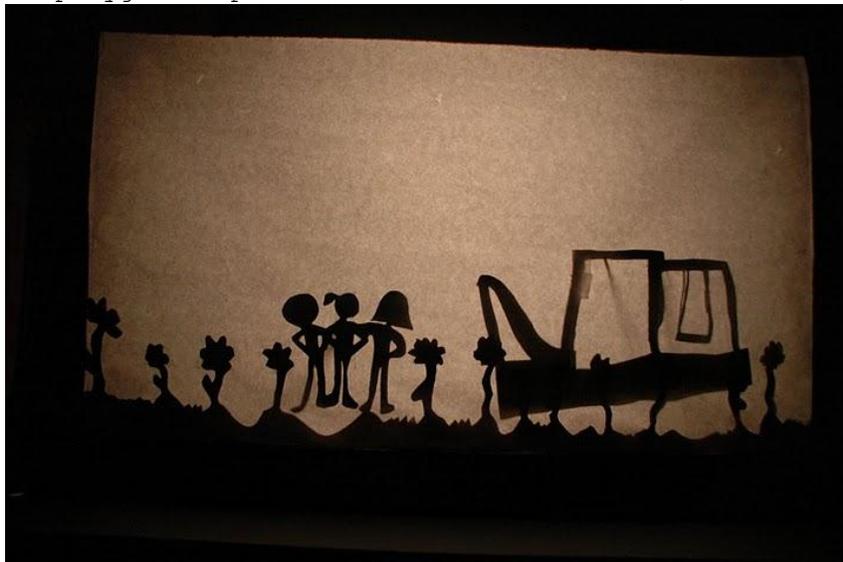
STUDENT 3

Yeah, but I really want him to see the play.

SCENE 5

PRETENDING FOR LIFE

(Shadow: a boy standing on top of the playground platform. He holds a flower.)



(Sound: Kids playing at lunch hour)

STUDENT AS OBERON

Flower of this purple dye, hit with Cupid's archery...all through lunch everyone will be in love with everyone. Wild! I am King of the Magic Spirits. Give me the changeling and all will be well.

(Shadow box: Titania crosses to Oberon, flapping her arms.)



STUDENT AS TITANIA

I was foolish to disobey. Fly! Fly! Fairies, Titania commands.

(Lights out on shadow box and the focus returns to the actor.)

BOTTOM

That meddler Oberon--He'll get in your dreams. Careful for that child, he's messing with magic.

TEACHER

It's just a play.

BOTTOM

Bite your tongue my man. Just a play indeed! The play is the thing.

TEACHER

I've heard that.

BOTTOM

From me, just now. Shall I say it again?

TEACHER

No, it's alright--

BOTTOM

--It's not alright. You've got the post show blues. Why it's just like me and the boys after performing for the Duke. We wanted to take it on the road. Sparta, Gaul, Ottawa...Think big. But be prepared.

SCENE 6

THINKING LIKE YOUR CHARACTER

(Shadow: Titania in hot seat, other students.)

TITANIA-STUDENT

I'm a good dancer and I know magic. I love music and playing games.

STUDENT 2

What games do you play? Do you like to skip?

TITANIA-STUDENT

Yes, yes I do. I skip in the forest and over by the lake until it starts to get bright.

STUDENT 3

What food do you like to eat in the forest?

TITANIA-STUDENT

Uhm-Honey Suckle Soup. It's great. My great grandmother taught me.

TEACHER

Excellent character work Titania. How did you think of that soup?

TITANIA-STUDENT

I just made it up. But I do make a special soup with my great grandma. She's had the recipe forever since before we came from the old country.

TEACHER

Good connection.

BOTTOM

Marvelous imagination. Marvelous. Good character work.

SCENE 7

SHAKESPEARE, MY BUDDY

(Shadow: Bedtime, home of a student.)



PUCK STUDENT

(Reading the text)

If we shadows have offended... I love this part. It means actors and the fairies. It's magical pretend. Let's read the scene again all the way to the call for applause.

PARENT

Phoebe, I'm so impressed. I didn't start reading Shakespeare until I was in Grade ten.

PUCK STUDENT

Oh Dad, you missed out.

(Shadow box lights go out, with final sounds of magic and thunder.)

BOTTOM

You bet you did. Until now. Marvelous, brave new world. That girl is now the teacher. Ah my creator's genius, my good Shakespeare. His work is filled with lessons for the ages.

TEACHER

It's good to remember how Shakespeare has inspired them. But it might be so much easier to just do *The Three Little Pigs* or--

BOTTOM

Ohh, I could be the wolf, I'll huff and I'll puff
and I will blooooooww your house down.

TEACHER

On second thought--

BOTTOM

Too much?

TEACHER

A tad.

BOTTOM

Right you are mate.

SCENE 8

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

(Shadow: walking in the moonlight. Cooler, blue light from the shadow box. Granddad with donkey ears. Granddad plays bottom and the student plays the other parts.)



GRANDDAD AS BOTTOM

Thisbe! I were only thine, if I were fair.

STUDENT GRANDCHILD AS QUINCE

*O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted! Fly masters!
Help!*

(Exeunt all except Bottom and Puck)

STUDENT GRANDCHILD AS PUCK

So then they are alone on the stage, and Puck will play his trick. He says: *"Now that's what I call an entrance. Go on, yelp, I'll follow you, lead you round and about, With a neigh, and a bark, and a grunt, and a shout!"*



(Exit puck)

GRANDDAD AS BOTTOM

Why do they run away? This is knavery to fright me.

(They laugh.)

STUDENT GRANDCHILD

Granddad that's great...It's so funny. Now let's do the whole scene about Bottom's dream.

GRANDDAD

Alright. You know I played Bottom in high-school. And Malvolio too.

STUDENT

Malvolio?

GRANDDAD

Twelfth Night--Hilarious play. Sure fire. Comic-Tragic. Perhaps next year your teacher could do that one.

STUDENT

Laughing and crying. That's a good combination.

GRANDDAD

Like life Sam.

STUDENT

Did you read all the plays Granddad when you taught University?

GRANDDAD

At least twice.

(Shadow: Lights Out)

BOTTOM

Hmm, I saw his playing of Bottom. A tad intellectual I felt. Marred by Freudian interpretation.

(Suddenly reveling in a memory of his sexual prowess)
Ahh Titania, me thought I had--

TEACHER

(Calling for classroom decorum)
Enough of that Sir.

BOTTOM

Yes, well, the play takes you places--

TEACHER

--And leaves you places.

BOTTOM

Yes, and what's left?

TEACHER

What's left?

SCENE 9

TEAMPLAY LINES

STUDENT

Uh...uh..Doth the moon..uh..

STUDENT 2

Shine...that...

STUDENT

--Shine that night?

TEACHER

It's not a question.

STUDENT

I know. I was just making sure I heard it right.

TEACHER

Thanks for prompting Sam.

STUDENT

I'm trying to know it as good as Sam does.

TEACHER

I know you are. We are all working together.

STUDENT

Cause we're a team.

(Lights/Music Transition)

BOTTOM

Yes, exactly. We all have our parts to play.

SCENE 10

OBERON AND TEACHER'S NIGHTMARE

(This scene may be both condensed,
and broken up, dreamily disjointed.)

OBERON STUDENT

I met Shakespeare. Too many lines. All the lines.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sorry for the interruption again. Teachers can we
have a brief five minute meeting at recess about the
playground opening. In the staffroom at recess.
Thanks. And I apologize for the interruption.

(Oberon Student and the teacher might
share some of these lines. It will
become apparent Oberon Student is
having an actor's nightmare.)

OBERON STUDENT AND TEACHER

(Inner voice)

Ah, this is crazy! There's too much
going on!



ENSEMBLE

*If we shadows have offended, think but this and all
is mended.*

BOTTOM

Your students made cue cards, all on their own!?

OBERON STUDENT AND TEACHER

Fairies, let's work on the revels dance. Let's begin
from the circle formation. Serena, you're kneeling
down so the audience can see Titania in her bower._

(Knock on the door again.)

DOOR STUDENT

We're collecting the field trip forms for the
Watermania outing.

DOROTHY

Mr. Calby, can I go to the bathroom?

TEACHER

Yes Dorothy. Who is going with you?

DOROTHY

Sam, can you come with me?

SAM

Sure, we can practice our lines while we go!

(Sound: recess bell, Oberon student,
stirs in his bed.)

TEACHER AND OBERON STUDENT

This is madness.

OBERON STUDENT

Too many lines. Learning. Interrupt--Practice--No stops. Will we ever be ready?

PARENT

(Parent is checking on his/her child)
Michael, Michael, are you all right?

OBERON STUDENT

Yes, I was having an amazing dream.

PARENT

I heard you call out.



OBERON STUDENT

I was really scared. I was dreaming I was Mr. Calby and I had to organize our play. So much work.

PARENT

If you've been so worried, why are you smiling?

OBERON STUDENT

Because I really love our play Mom. And! I know all my lines now.

PARENT

You've wrestled and named your fear. I'm so proud of you. *The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling, /Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; And...*

ENSEMBLE

(Said with precision, voice bodying forth)
...as imagination bodies forth/The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen/Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing/A local habitation and a name.

PARENT

Dreams help us understand our awake world.

OBERON STUDENT

Like doing our play. We can try on our dreams for life.

PARENT

When did you get so smart!

OBERON STUDENT

Day by day. One line at a time.

SCENE 11

FINAL TOUCH

TEACHER

Places please for the start of the run.

PARENT

Mr. Calby-

TEACHER

Please--no interruptions, we have just one more day.

PARENT

I was talking with Dorothy and I brought these in.

(Different plants appear lining the bottom of the screen.)



TEACHER

What a wonderful final touch. Thank-you.

PARENT

See you at the opening everyone.

DOROTHY

Thanks Mom.

TEACHER

Places everyone.

SCENE 12

PRINCIPAL AND COMMUNITY

(Quick transition. Now the time is just before the performance and the principal is giving a welcome speech to the invited audience.)



PRINCIPAL

As your principal, I wish to congratulate all of you and a special word for Mr. Calby. There are many teachers who make big plans in the fall for their student's school year. But who would have expected to have a production with lights, sounds, costumes and set design. All of you have worked as a team and you have done our school community proud. Thanks to our wonderful audience. I lend you my hands because you all deserve a round of applause.

SCENE 13

FINDING YOUR VOICE



STUDENT LION

ROARRRRRRRRRR! HEAR ME ROAAAAAAAAAARR!!!!

SCENE 14

BRING THE PLAY HOME

(Shadow: Airplane crossing the world.)

(Students are taking bows at the close of the play, sound of applause.)

STUDENT 3

Dad! You made it!

(Student takes a moment to acknowledge her dad's travelling all the way to see her play.)

Um, this is my dad everyone! Oh, um--Are there any questions?



OBERON PARENT

How do you memorize your lines?

OBERON STUDENT

Oh Mom, you know. You helped me.

(There's a pause and then one student prompts.)

GIRL STUDENT

Any other questions? You can ask us questions like--Did you like the costumes? We made them. Did you like the set? We made it too. Did you like the play? We made it. Well, Shakespeare wrote the story. He lived a long time ago. Um are there any other questions?

(Shadow lights out.)

TEACHER

More questions.

BOTTOM

I'm really on the verge of tears thinking of how proud those parents must be.

TEACHER

Yes--I--

BOTTOM

--We're sensitive, we artists.

TEACHER

--I'm a teacher too.

SCENE 15

SISTER'S WORD REVEL

(This scene could be cut for time.)

DOROTHY

That was so fun. Granddad, thanks for that tip about the pause line. Dad! Did you see the revels? I was reveling.

(Turning to her sister)

Revel means--

DOROTHY'S SISTER

I know what it means.

PARENT

Rissa!

(Now speaking to Dorothy)

Your sister is really proud of you.

DOROTHY'S SISTER

Yeah, I am. I wish I did a play when I was in your grade.

BOTTOM

You are indeed a teacher. Not knowing the future, but touching it just the same.

SCENE 16

TO THE FUTURE

(Shadow: The girl who was researching before is at it again. *Romeo and Juliet* scene appears.)

GIRL STUDENT

Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon. Mom!



MOM/DAD

(Arriving into scene)

What Phara?

GIRL STUDENT

What does envious mean?

MOM/DAD

It means jealous, like you want what someone else has. The moon wants to be as bright as the sun. *Romeo and Juliet*? You're reading this again?

GIRL STUDENT

Yes. Really, really carefully. For next year. It's got so many good parts.

MOM

Ah yes my Juliet, next year you are in Grade Three. The oldest of the group--Perhaps you will get that part.

GIRL STUDENT

I hope so.

MOM

But it's such a sad play. They both die. When we read the story version it made you cry.

GIRL STUDENT

Because it's real Mom. I like it.

(Lights out from the shadow box,
focus taken by actor. Musical notes
heard with the flute.)

BOTTOM

There it is. The dream continues; the music plays on.

TEACHER

We had high expectations. Sometimes I had to remind myself "Hey some of them are just six years old." But they created an ensemble of players and really cared for the work. They were brilliant.

(pause.)

Yes, you're right; your work here is done.

BOTTOM

For now.

(Bottom starts to exit. Teacher stays out.)

TEACHER

Where are you going?

BOTTOM

Aye boyo, I knew you'd miss me.

(Bottom fully exits behind the screen and beckons Teacher)

BOTTOM (CONTINUED)

Follow me. You know it's your desire. It is Faerie hour

(Teacher looks around and follows with great curiosity. Now they both become shadows as part of the shadow box.)

BOTTOM AS SHADOW

You're one of us now.

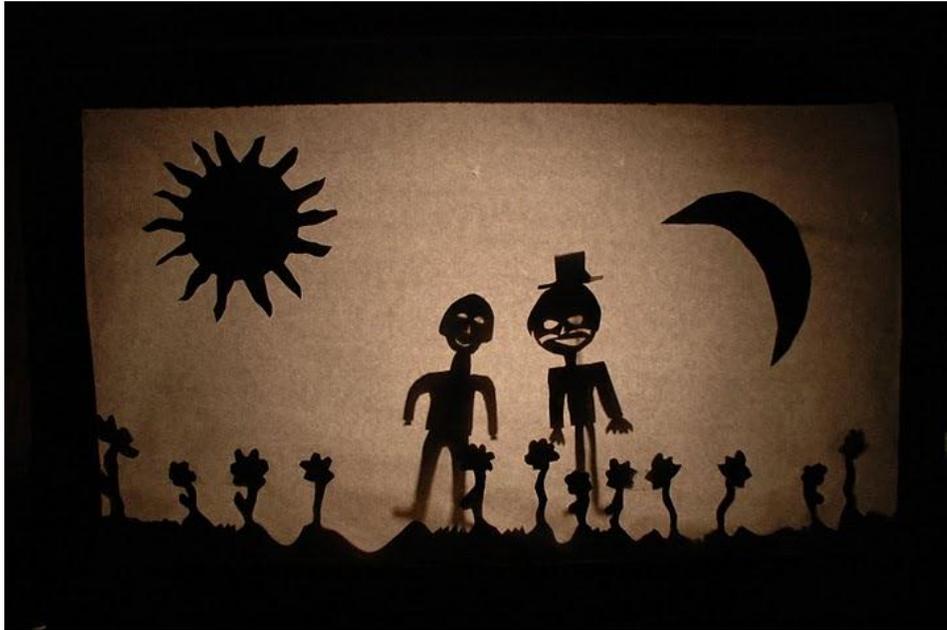
TEACHER AS SHADOW

What do I do here?

BOTTOM AS SHADOW

Chase airy nothings. Find meaning. Name the shadows. It's a good life's work.

(As many as possible of the shadows join them in chorus in an expression of a happy community of players.)



CHORUS

(Repeating the music and singing from the start of the play so that the sharing arrives full circle.)

*Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through briar,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire
I do wander everywhere.*

END OF THE PLAY

Naming the Shadows: Theatre as Research

An a/r/tographic commentary

(Within the shadows)
TEACHER: What do I do here?

BOTTOM: Chase airy nothings. Find meaning. Name the shadows.

- Mackenzie, 2009

Using an elementary class' journey with Shakespeare, a group of researcher-artists developed a research-based play to explore the nature of learning in the classroom. The research took place over a three-month period while students aged six through nine in a Montessori classroom in Vancouver, Canada worked on an adapted version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Carter, 2008). Data generated from the preparation, process, and production of the Shakespeare play provided the resources from which to create the research-based play: *Naming the Shadows*. The research-based play has been performed five times,¹ and with the help of participant and audience feedback the text below reflects an artistic representation of the research.

Naming the Shadows shares key moments of learning that emerged for students, parents, and the teacher during the Shakespeare project. The play represents a desire to blend the work of artists and researchers.² This *métissage*, as Irwin (2004) refers to in her work on A/r/tography, is part of the ongoing journey of finding ways to weave the complex negotiations of writers/artists/researchers, the participants, and the data we are working with in

¹ *Naming the Shadows* was performed for the original research participants (Vancouver Montessori classroom), the UBC Drama Institute (2009), and three scholarly conferences: the International Drama Education Research Institute (Sydney, AU), Canadian Association for Theatre Research (Ottawa, CA), Canadian Society for the Study of Education (Ottawa, CA) in 2009. The cast in all performances included Jaime Beck, George Belliveau, Graham W. Lea and Amanda Wager.

² For a full analysis of the playwriting process for this play, see MacKenzie & Belliveau in this issue.

our research. We have chosen to integrate A/r/tography as a methodology to emphasize our shifting identities. This approach offers a way to examine these interactions of the self and the ideas that weave their way within a creative project (Sinner et al, 2006).

Naming the Shadows tries not to privilege the artistry over the research, or vice versa. Instead the play seeks the connections and spaces that intersect, which when engaged in arts-based educational research, are many and overlapping. Our team sought to articulate and perform the connections and spaces, so that we could share, explore, and expand our art and research in dynamic and multiple ways. In working towards integrating research and art, the play provides shadows to convey meaning rather than facts and certainty (Bochner & Ellis, 2000; Greene, 1995).

In this commentary section we offer a brief representation of the importance of engaging with the question of source for a research-based drama, which includes both the research data itself and what we bring to the process as individuals. We view the work as a rhizome, which in a/r/tographic terms is "an assemblage that moves and flows in dynamic momentum" (Irwin and Springgay, 2008, p. 20). The concept is originally derived from the name given to plants whose roots travel and entangle such that it is difficult to follow the path to the beginning. In his poem "A Tangle of Lines," Leggo challenges us to avoid straight lines "instead a/r/tographers weave their ways in tangled lines,/ know wholeness/ in holes and gaps, in fragments" (2008, p. xiv).

Here now are a few of the tangled lines of the rhizome as we sketch the sources of writing and then producing *Naming the Shadows*.

Amanda Wager:

I am yearning to feel my familiar identity of a teacher.

Walking into a familiar space ... I feel at home in this school, this classroom, surrounded by children eager to share their insights. But instead of filling up our time with math and science and rules and rewards, we focus solely on our storytelling through the creation of silhouettes. Their creations will be shadows within the research. It seems easy to forget that the children are the core, the beginning, the reason. I began as an artist. I became a teacher. And I am so unclear of my present identity of a researcher.

CHILDREN ARE THE CORE

I AM YEARNING
STOP SILHOUETTE TELLING
SHARING INSIGHTS
COMMUNITY
CREATING
I became a teacher



Student creating shadow for the Peter Brook trapeze character.

(Inset photo) Researchers preparing the shadows.

Jaime Beck:

Drumming for me has always been about community.

People go to drum circles with enough instruments to share, everyone is always welcome. I was excited to weave these feelings of community and these instruments into the production, drumming is usually part of my life that is quite separate from the academy. I began with a simple walking beat, added a simple melody to the play's refrain, and from there added accents to the shadows and to the script: a singing bowl for magical moments, soft rolls of thunder for suspense, and the shake of a coin belt to transition scenes. I was most nervous to play in front of the classroom students whose story we were representing. I wanted them to find it entertaining; I also wanted them to see their own reflection.

shake of the coin belt

ENTERTAINING

WALKING BEAT
 magical moments weave these feelings
 COMMUNITY A SINGING BOWL

Over Hill, Over Dale

Music: J. Beck Lyrics: W. Shakespeare

Voice

Recorder

Rec.

☆ SHADOW PUPPETRY ☆

- Clown character on a giant trapeze
- Rabbit -
- Stream of water -
- Parent and child looking at internet
- words "lines, lines, lines"...
- "page by page" -
- donkey -
- small lion
- big lion
- "roar" -
- ROAR!
- flower weeping in the rain
- egg and whisk -
- Music notes -
- a crown -
- globe -
- plane -
- Playground
- Boy holding a flower -
- girl with wings -
- 3 kids together -
- bed, lamp, book -
- grandpa with donkey ears -
- Lantern on a stick -
- Plants on bottom
- Student with a flower -
- Suh -
- Moon -

Over hill, o ver dale, Through bush, 'n' through briar, o ver park, o ver

pale, where.

Graham Lea: Stage managerial responsibility.

Part of the stage managerial responsibility is to remain grounded, considering practical matters such as re-use, portability, and safety: a balancing act between research, artistry, and practicality. Integrating shadow puppetry into *Naming the Shadows* played to our strengths as a research team, but also introduced additional time and design constraints. This balancing act continues through production and performance: maintaining a detailed stage script including blocking notes, and audio/lighting cues. These cues become characters in performance responding to performers and audience to help convey meaning.

Balancing act

Research, artistry, practicality

Research team strengths Audio & lighting

SHADOW PUPPETRY

COMMUNITY



The collectively devised shadow box from the inside. Shadows in florist foam ready to be used.

George Belliveau: Performing as an actor to share research.

Sharing allows me to play, test out, interpret and use the tools (theatre) that were being researched in the elementary classroom. Acting with my graduate students develops community, where we're creating together, taking risks, and breaking down some of the hierarchies of the professor/student power relationship. Acting also takes me back to my initial theatre training where I developed a love for, and understanding of, the power of theatre as both a learning medium and a form of sharing heightened moments of human behavior. Performing research brings more than data to life, it allows for new understandings and interpretations to occur for both audience and performers.

New understandings

Play, test, interpret

COMMUNITY
Weave these feelings
SHARING HEIGHTENED MOMENTS
The power of theatre

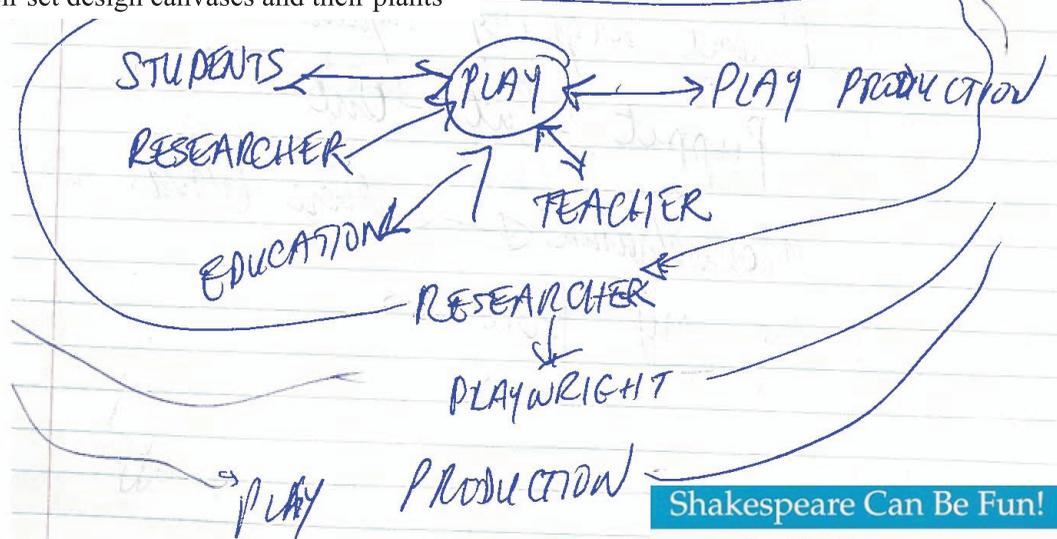
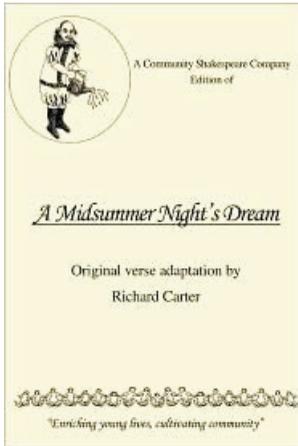


The research artifact with cuttings from transcriptions of data from parents, the teacher, researcher observations, and students. (G. Belliveau, centre; J. Beck, left; D. MacKenzie, right.)



Student participants with their set design canvases and their plants brought in by a parent.

had "Waking Up
 so much work"
 ↳ ↳ as Bottom to life
 "Its time to wake up"
 ?
 city - too much



Shakespeare Can Be Fun!

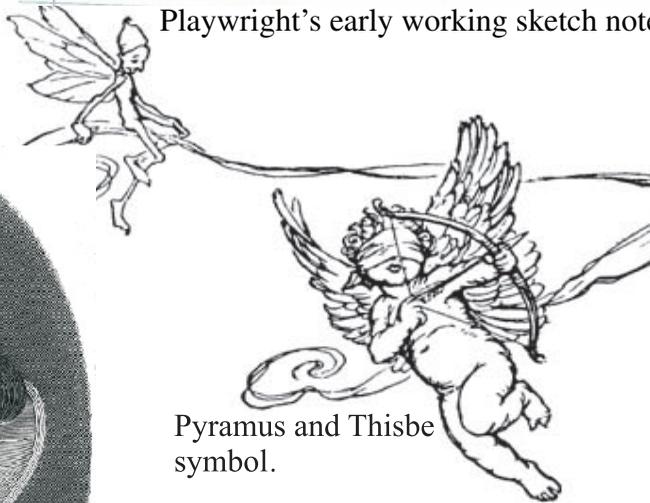
A Midsummer Night's Dream

For Kids

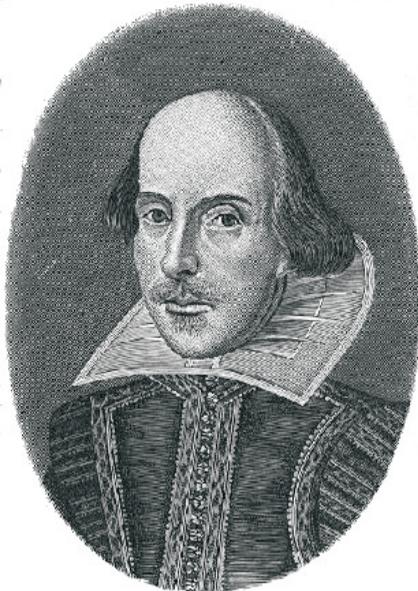


by Lois Burdett

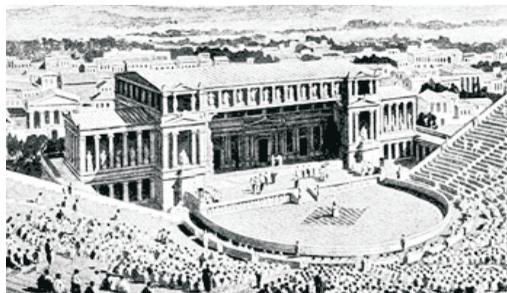
Playwright's early working sketch note.



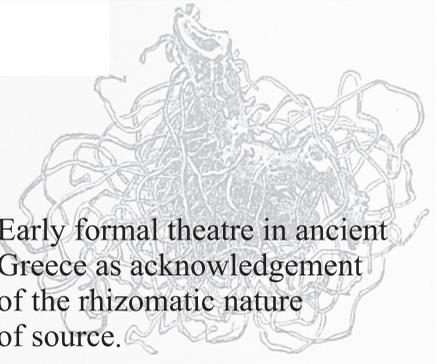
Pyramus and Thisbe symbol.



Portrait of Shakespeare.



Early formal theatre in ancient Greece as acknowledgement of the rhizomatic nature of source.



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