Shakespeare Ate My Brain

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DEDICATION

To our understanding spouses.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Inevitably, community theatres are destined to have Shakespeare and zombies. This comedy has both! Dr. Marlowe-Thomas, an aspiring new director, is desperate to stage the ultimate Shakespearean production of the "Scottish Play." She is convinced Shakespeare originally wrote his plays to be performed by a cast of actors that included zombies. To that end, she is auditioning Ian, a struggling young actor, using an original manuscript of “Macbeth.” Before they realize it, two actual zombie actors (Rick Burbage and Eddie Booth, both based on real, historically renowned Shakespearean actors of their day) appear and the fun kicks into high gear, mixing theatre superstitions and history, Shakespearean speeches and insults, sword fights, and body parts into a silly, smart, delightful show that is enormously entertaining and slyly educational.

Approximate running time: about an hour.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

“Shakespeare Ate My Brain” had its world premiere on August 2, 2012 in Minneapolis, Minnesota as part of the Minnesota Fringe Festival with the following cast and crew:

Dr. Gwen Marlow-Thomas .....Karen Batdorf
Ian Chancey .....Bradley Damon
Eddie Booth .....Jeffery Goodson
Rick Burbage .....Barry Shay

Directed by Chris Kliesen Wehrman.
Choreography by Bailey Zane Wehrman.
Stage Management by David Nyberg.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 1 w)

DR. GWYNETH MARLOWE-THOMAS: (Female) An experienced theatre professional that happened to find a manuscript of the Scottish Play that had zombies in it, and is desperate to prove that Shakespeare's plays originally included zombies. She believes that if she can find actual zombie actors, she will become the preeminent Shakespearean director of all time.

IAN (EYE-AN) CHANCY: (Male) A dinner theater actor, who is auditioning for his first Shakespearean role, eager to try anything to get cast.

RICK BURBAGE: (Male) A zombie actor from Shakespeare's time, he claims to have known and worked with the bard himself.

EDDIE BOOTH: (Male) A zombie actor from the mid-1800's who has been performing with Burbage since becoming undead.

Additional zombie actors can be added for the finale (A Midsummer's Night of the Living Dead).

SETTING

An empty theatre.

TIME

Present day.

SET REQUIREMENTS

An empty stage with a few boxes or a small table (covered in front) behind which Eddie will hide and pop up as the dismembered head during the Hamlet soliloquy.

PROPS

Audition sides
Résumé
Bag containing the following: zombie accessories including fake teeth, old manuscript, voodoo dolls resembling Eddie and Rick, pin, official certificate
Scripts
Silly hats
Zombie hand
Zombie thumb
Taper
Two straws
Swords
Zombie head resembling Eddie
Piece of paper
Zombie ears

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(AT RISE: LIGHTS up. IAN is center stage, auditioning by reading the witch's speech from "Macbeth.")

IAN: Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.
Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

(HE finishes with a flourish, waits for a response… a pause, then DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS enters from the audience, looking around the stage as if something should have happened. She ends up in front of him with a heavy sigh.)

DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: No, no, no, no...
IAN: Shall I try it again?
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: What's the point? You've tried it 17 different ways and it's just not working…
IAN: What if I tried it like Captain Kirk? Dibble, dibble, toil and tribble…
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Please stop.
IAN: Maybe if I tried reading a male role?
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: You poor little innocent. All Shakespeare's roles were originally played by men. And any actor worth his... *(Looking at his résumé.)* Oh, the *Stage and Steak Dinner Theatre*...

DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: *(Cont'd.)* If you *want* to become a real actor you should be able to make any sacrifice, play any part. Here, turn to ACT III, Scene 4, the passage is marked. Take your time and go.
IAN: *(Finding the speech, he prepares and starts.)* Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo!

(During the passage, as DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS throws direction at IAN, he should adjust immediately.)

DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Look left!
IAN: How say you?
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Look right!
IAN: Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: You're angry!
IAN: If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back,
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Angrier!
IAN: Our monuments shall be the maws of kites.
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Ooooh, not so angry!
IAN: Avaunt! And quit my sight!
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: You're in love…
IAN: Let the earth hide thee!
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Jete', jete'!
IAN: Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: Big finish!
IAN: Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with! *(HE finishes and waits for a response…)*
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: *(Yelling.)* Argh! Why is this so hard?!!!!!
IAN: Is there, maybe, a different play I could audition for?
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: No! It has to be this play! You're not doing it right! You have to capture the essence…
IAN: The Esses? You mean like a lisp?
DR. MARLOWE-THOMAS: No, you fool. The true, cosmic meta-reality has to come out if you want to produce just the right response.
IAN: Okay…

End of Freeview

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