Welcome to Will Power!

As part of Yale Rep’s educational initiative WILL POWER!, we are pleased to offer this Study Guide to accompany our production of Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale, directed by Liz Diamond.

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All quotations from The Winter’s Tale come from the Arden Shakespeare: Second Series, reprinted in 1996.

This guide is yours.
Feel free to keep notes, doodle, and write throughout!
SCANDAL IN SICILIA

All is not well in Sicilia. King Leontes fears that his pregnant wife, Hermione, is having an affair with his friend, Polixenes, the king of Bohemia. Polixenes has been visiting the Sicilian court for the last nine months, which has fueled Leontes’ jealousy. The Sicilian king orders his lord Camillo to kill Polixenes. However, Camillo believes in Hermione’s innocence, and instead warns Polixenes about the murderous plot. Both Polixenes and Camillo decide to flee to Bohemia. Leontes, further enraged by Camillo’s defiance of his orders, throws the queen into prison to await her trial. A verdict from the Delphic Oracle is demanded to confirm Hermione’s guilt or innocence. Meanwhile, Hermione gives birth to a daughter. Her friend, Paulina (married to Antigonus, another of Leontes’ lords) presents the baby to Leontes, hoping that he’ll soften upon seeing his infant daughter. But, believing the child is Polixenes’ and not his own flesh and blood, Leontes orders Antigonus to take the baby and abandon it someplace far away.

Seemingly nothing can tame Leontes’ fervor or prove to him that the new baby is his. During Hermione’s trial, the Oracle’s words are read, and its proclamation clears Hermione, Polixenes, and Camillo of any wrongdoing. Before the Sicilian king can beg for his wife’s forgiveness, news arrives that their young son, Mamillius, has died. Overcome by grief, Hermione faints and dies. As Leontes mourns the loss of his wife and only son, Antigonus travels to Bohemia where he leaves the baby girl near the coast. In a dream, Hermione told Antigonus to name the girl Perdita and leave gold and tokens by her. After he abandons the child, an old shepherd finds Perdita and adopts her. Antigonus meets a grisly fate on Bohemia’s shores: a bear attacks and kills him. The shepherd’s son witnesses the attack and reports the tragedy.

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Sixteen years pass, as reported by the character Time. Perdita, believing herself to be a common shepherdess, has caught the eye of a swain (humble country boy) named Doricles. But, “Doricles” is actually Florizel, the prince of Bohemia and Polixenes’ son. Worried that Florizel has fallen for someone below his station, Polixenes and Camillo disguise themselves and attend a raucous sheep-shearing festival. During the dancing and merriment, “Doricles” and Perdita are betrothed, a vow as lasting as a Church marriage. Furious, Polixenes reveals himself and orders Florizel to break off the union. Camillo decides to ignore the wishes of the king and help the couple remain together; he urges them to find refuge in Sicilia. Fearing the king’s wrath, the old shepherd and his son (the clown) join them on their journey.

Florizel plans to arrive in Sicilia with his new wife and claim that he’s on a mission of forgiveness, sent by his father. The truth of Florizel’s trip to Sicilia is quickly uncovered after Camillo and Polixenes follow them to Leontes’ palace. Then Perdita’s true identity as Leontes and Hermione’s lost daughter is revealed. All celebrate, and they retreat to Paulina’s country home, where a statue of Hermione has just been completed. As they gaze upon the statue… it comes to life! Hermione is alive amongst her family and friends. Paulina and Camillo are engaged, and Florizel and Perdita have the blessings of their parents. The two kingdoms are united and rejoice over the day’s miracles.
MAJOR PLAYERS: WHO’S WHO IN

LEONTES
King of Sicilia
“Leontes a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten; and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found.” (The Oracle about Leontes, 3.2.133-135)

HERMIONE
Queen of Sicilia
“...my past life Hath been as continent, as chaste, as true, As I am now unhappy.” (3.2.33-35)

PERDITA
Daughter of Leontes and Hermione / Adopted Daughter of the Old Shepherd / Lover of Florizel
“This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever Ran on the green-ward: nothing she does or seems But smacks of something greater than herself, Too noble for this place.” (Polixenes about Perdita, 4.4.156-159)

MAMILLIUS
Son of Leontes and Hermione
“You’ll kiss me hard and speak to me as if I were a baby still.” (2.1.5-6)

ANTIGONUS
Lord of Sicilia
“I’ll pawn the little blood which I have left To save the innocent: anything possible.” (2.3.165-166)

PAULINA
Wife of Antigonus
“I’ll use that tongue I have: if wit flow from’t As boldness from my bosom, let ’t not be doubted I shall do good.” (2.2.53-55)

CAMILLO
Lord of Sicilia
“Let villainy itself forswear’t. I must Forsake the court: to do’t, or no, is certain To me a break-neck.” (1.2.361-363)

EMILIA
Lady Attending to Hermione

CLEOMENES & DION
Lords of Sicilia

SICILIA
Here’s a description of the major characters in *The Winter’s Tale*. In addition to these named characters, Shakespeare populates Sicilia and Bohemia with lords, officers, gentlemen, servants, a gaoler, a mariner, shepherds, and shepherdesses. Even Time itself makes an appearance in the play. Yale Rep’s production of *The Winter’s Tale* will be done with a cast of sixteen actors. As you watch, note the clever ways that the production creates the illusion of almost twice as many characters!

### Sicilia and Bohemia?

**POLIXENES**
King of Bohemia

“Kings are no less unhappy, their issue not being gracious, than they are in losing them when they have approved their virtues.” (4.2.27-28)

**FLORIZEL**
Son of Polixenes / Lover of Perdita

“That were I crown’d the most imperial monarch
Thereof most worthy, were I the fairest youth
That ever made eye swerve, had force and knowledge
More than was ever man’s, I would not prize them
Without her love.” (4.4.373-377)

**ARCHIDAMUS**
Lord of Bohemia

**OLD SHEPHERD**
Adoptive Father of Perdita

“Though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-gentlewoman in the scape.”

(3.3.72-73)

**CLOWN**
Son of the Old Shepherd

“We are but plain fellows, sir.” (4.4.721)

**AUTOLYCUS**
A Rogue

“My father named me Autolycus; who, being as I am, littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.” (4.3.24-26)

**DORCAS & MOPSA**
Shepherdesses
Shakespeare takes his audience on a grand journey across distance and time in *The Winter’s Tale*: from the royal court of Sicilia to the coast of Bohemia (Shakespeare’s grasp on geography was much shakier than his skill with words—the real Bohemia was actually nowhere near the sea) over a time span of sixteen years. But while Shakespeare shows the passing of the years by turning Time into a character onstage, how did he create the very different spaces of *The Winter’s Tale*? How can a playwright evoke both the grandeur of Leontes’ court and the rustic charms of rural Bohemia on the same stage?

In Shakespeare’s time, theatres looked very different from contemporary theatres (like Yale Rep). The first permanent English playhouse, called The Theatre, was built by James Burbage in Shoreditch in London in 1576. Theatres like this, the Rose, the Fortune, and the Globe (which was owned by Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men) could seat as many as 3,000. Theatre-going was a rowdy event in Shakespeare’s time, causing many London citizens to object to the bawdy nature of some of the plays and the fighting and drinking among the audiences. In the late 16th century, these disruptive gatherings became downright dangerous when the Bubonic Plague began to spread, and large groups of people congregating for theatrical events posed a great health risk. Finally, in 1596, the public presentation of plays and all theatres within the city limits of London were banned. All theatres located in the city were forced to move to the south side of the River Thames, outside of London’s boundaries, to suburban areas of London like Southwark (where the Globe was located).

Elizabethan theatre artists performed their works outdoors, come rain or shine. The “groundlings” or “stinkards”—playgoers with the cheapest tickets—stood in the open courtyard surrounding the thrust stage (a stage that extends into the audience on three sides and connects to the backstage area at the rear), while the wealthier ticketholders sat in the three galleried levels surrounding the stage (where they could both see and be seen). The very best seats in the house, known as the “Lord’s Rooms,” were actually onstage, immediately above the stage wall in a balcony that was used by actors (for scenes like Juliet’s sighing over Romeo), and for seating the rich and the nobility. Imagine watching a play while the entire audience is watching you!
Unlike the courtyard, the stage itself was covered by a roof (known as “the heavens”), elaborately painted to depict the sun, the stars, and the planets. At the back of the stage, there were two or three doors leading to the tiring houses (what we would call dressing rooms), the balcony, and probably a third level where musicians could be accommodated.

While there may have been a few props (like thrones or boulders), there was no scenery to depict the different settings, and no curtain dropping to signal the change from one scene to another. Shakespeare’s texts have very few stage directions (though one of the most famous is found in The Winter’s Tale: “exit, pursued by a bear” in the middle of Act 3, Scene 3), and the change from one scene to another was indicated simply by characters exiting and entering from the stage doors. So with no scenery and only the most rudimentary of special effects (like rolling a cannonball to create the sound of thunder), how did Shakespeare make the different settings come alive for the audience?

Simple: he taught the audience to “see” with their ears. Shakespeare’s language evokes rich imagery of the places his characters visit, and the things they see. For example, in Act 3, Scene 3, the Mariner speaks ominously of how “the skies look grimly/And threaten present blusters,” thus setting the scene for when the clown simultaneously describes two dramatic offstage events—a ship wrecked by a storm, and a man eaten by a bear—using only his words and his performance. Today, the progress in technology means that theatre directors have the option of using a wealth of different design elements—costume, set, sound, and lighting—to augment Shakespeare’s verbal descriptions, making the theatre experience more visual. But Shakespeare first built his worlds with words, and the beauty of those creations still resonates strongly with audiences today. When you hear Shakespeare’s words spoken in The Winter’s Tale, what strange lands do his speeches conjure up in your mind?

—TANYA DEAN

Read the speeches from The Winter’s Tale below. What imagery does each speaker use? Also, note the references to sight or seeing. Why do you think that Shakespeare calls upon this sense so frequently?

**CLOWN’S DESCRIPTION:**
I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land! But I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky: betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin’s point….I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages, how it takes up the shore! But that’s not to the point. O, the most piteous cry of the poor souls! sometimes to see ‘em, and not to see ‘em: now the ship boring the moon with her main-mast, and anon swallowed with yeast and froth, as you thrust a cork into a hogs-head. And then for the land-service, to see how the bear tore out his shoulder-bone; how he cried to me for help and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. But to make an end of the ship, to see how the sea flap-dragoned it: but first, how the poor souls roared, and the sea mocked them: and how the poor gentleman roared, and the bear mocked him, both roaring louder than the sea or weather. (3.3.83-101)

**THIRD GENTLEMAN:**
Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of. There might you have beheld one joy crown another, so and in such manner that it seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears. There was casting up of eyes, holding up of hands, with countenances of such distraction, that they were to be known by garment, not by favour. Our king, being ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that joy were now become a loss, cries ‘O, thy mother, thy mother!’ then asks Bohemia forgiveness; then embraces his son-in-law; then again worries he his daughter with clipping her; now he thanks the old shepherd, which stands by, like a weather-bitten conduit of many kings’ reigns. I never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it. (5.2.43-59)
THE POWER OF A TALE: LIZ DIAMOND

Liz Diamond is an award-winning director known for tackling some of the most challenging new and classic plays. At Yale Rep, where she is Resident Director, her productions have included Lucinda Coxon’s Happy Now?, Marcus Gardley’s dance of the holy ghosts, Richard Nelson’s translation of August Strindberg’s Miss Julie, Sunil Kuruvilla’s Fighting Words and Rice Boy, Seamus Heaney’s The Cure at Troy, Paul Schmidt’s translations of Molière’s School for Wives and Brecht’s St. Joan of the Stockyards, and Suzan-Lori Parks’s The America Play and The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World. Nationally, she has directed Lisa Loomer’s Distracted, Octavio Solis’s Gibraltar, a new translation of Euripides’ The Trojan Women at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Paul Schmidt’s translation of Racine’s Phaedra at the American Repertory Theatre, and Of Mice and Men at Arena Stage. Liz is a winner of the OBIE Award and Connecticut Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Direction.

Before the curtain rises on opening night, the director has already been working for months studying the script, auditioning the actors to play each role, and working with designers on the overall look of the production. In late fall, Liz sat down with her assistant director, Emily Reilly, to discuss her ideas for The Winter’s Tale.

EMILY REILLY: What made you want to direct The Winter’s Tale?

LIZ DIAMOND: I fell in love with this play for the first time when I saw a production many years ago directed by the great Swedish director, Ingmar Bergman.

I was floored by the power and the humanity of this play and utterly moved by the story itself, which has all the power of a kind of dark fairy tale. This is a story of a family torn asunder by the seizure of venomous lethal jealousy of the husband toward the wife and his best friend. I’d never been in the presence of that kind of vast, deep, and inexplicable rage in the theatre. The idea that a human being could become so possessed and so ultimately self-destructive is really frightening to me.

ER: The Winter’s Tale has a happy ending despite the dark fairy tale quality you describe. Most of Shakespeare’s plays can be classified as a comedy, a romance, or a tragedy. Which of these genres does The Winter’s Tale fit into?

LD: I think The Winter’s Tale defies genre. In some ways it’s a perfect play: it’s tragical comical, comical tragical. Written towards the end of Shakespeare’s career as a playwright, actor, and poet, he seems to have said to himself, “I can let the reins loose; I can let my talent and imagination run wild.” The language is so unleashed that the verse almost breaks free from the iambic pentameter into something that we would recognize as free verse. He lets the action of the play take us to a point where it seems all is lost (when that little baby is found alone on the shore with no one to protect her, no hope of being ever found). Then the play suddenly begins to turn with the arrival of a good shepherd, who takes up the baby and cares for it, and Bohemia, overflowing with a kind of anarchic joy, bursts into the stage. Nothing is impossible, and indeed restoration occurs against seemingly impossible odds.
ON DIRECTING THE WINTER'S TALE

ER: In your mind’s eye, what does the set of The Winter’s Tale look like? How are you going to make the very different worlds of Sicilia and Bohemia come alive?

LD: I’m starting with basic contrasts: It is winter in Sicilia. The days are cold and dark, and the sun sets early. It’s late summer in Bohemia. The days are long and sunny. In Sicilia we’re in the interior of the court, a place of order and luxury, a place of strict rules and exquisite manners. We know exactly who is boss and who is servant. Straight lines and cool colors will dominate Sicilia. In Bohemia we’re outside, it’s sheep-shearing time, a festival, and peasants are enjoying a playful, fun, and sexy holiday. The rules are relaxed. Warm, bright colors will dominate Bohemia. The lighting design is going to play a huge part in constructing these worlds because the play moves so quickly that one can’t have a lot of scenery.

ER: How will you work with the actors to embody these two contrasting worlds?

LD: Shakespeare gives the actors an enormous amount of information. The way the characters talk is very different in each place. In Sicilia generally the characters speak in verse, which conveys the formality of the courtly world. The language in Sicilia is much more controlled—people are careful about what they say, when they say it, and how they say it. In Bohemia they often speak in prose, the language is saucier. People are making wise cracks, telling jokes, and teasing one another. In some instances people pick pockets and trick one another.

When I’m working with the actors in Sicilia, we will be looking at the ways in which feelings may be concealed, contained, controlled. Posture and body language may be used to conceal emotion and control information about who you are, what you want, and how you are feeling, so that you are safe, so that your position of power is secure. In this very hierarchical court, one word out of place could get you into big trouble.

In Bohemia, the atmosphere is generally safer; people are freer to express themselves sexually and emotionally. They have the freedom to dance wildly, to wriggle their hips, to kiss each other on the lips, to run...
around, and to get drunk. The actors’ work in Bohemia will be about showing, not concealing. I’ll help the actors find the ways, in language and in gesture, that their characters freely express and satisfy appetites.

ER: I understand you have recently been auditioning actors for the roles of Hermione and Leontes. Are there any specific qualities you are looking for?

LD: In the case of Hermione, I’m looking for a woman who can convey a kind of womanly grace. Hermione expresses herself throughout the play with uncommon wit, compassion, and generosity. She is as wise beyond her years as her husband is immature well into his adulthood. They are out of sync in this way. To a certain extent, one could say that it is Hermione’s deep abiding sense of self that is ultimately her salvation. This strong sense of self that Hermione possesses may also be quite threatening to Leontes.

A friend of mine, who is a brilliant director, said to me recently, “Any dunce can play Hamlet, but you have to be a genius to play Leontes.” Now that may or may not be true. I’ve never directed Hamlet, but I do think you’re looking for a ferociously smart actor to play Leontes. For Leontes, I seek an actor who is a master of Shakespeare’s verse; who is capable of showing Leontes’ mercurial shifts of tone and temperament; and who is fearless about exploring and expressing the deep needs that make Leontes certain his wife and friend are guilty of adultery and treason, against all evidence to the contrary.

ER: Why do you think that Leontes is such a challenging character to play?

LD: The challenge is in his text above all—it’s gnarly, twisted, full of complicated, tortured reasoning. Just following the thought requires tremendous effort of intelligence and sensitivity. And the actor has to inhabit the feverish, sleepless mind that conceives those thoughts, the aching heart that feels Leontes’ excruciating pain. And then—he has to change! Leontes is given this extraordinary moment of insight into his own utter folly. In his rage he banishes his newborn daughter to certain death on foreign shores, desecrates the word of the Oracle, causing the death of his son and heir, and of his wife. Then he suddenly stops, and like a blinking mole in the sunlight says, as if awakening from a spell, “What have I done?”

Shakespeare grants this man the possibility of redemption by giving him the gift of time. Sixteen years pass. He spends it in a state of constant remorse, seeking any opportunity to repent through good acts. The idea that time and active atonement can actually create the possibility for new life is powerful to me; one feels that one is in the presence of a kind of parable about healing, forgiveness, and faith.

ER: Where do you think Leontes’ sudden rage, paranoia, and possession come from? And how will you work with the actor to discover those qualities?

LD: That question has to be discussed with the actor playing Leontes. Is his jealousy sudden? Or has it been growing these nine months that his best friend, Polixenes, has been his guest? Or is Leontes jealous by nature? I think two actors playing Leontes in two productions could build very strong and compelling performances on different answers to these questions. It’s important that the actor discovers and understands Leontes’ rage from inside. I will seek to guide and influence those choices, but it will be a partnership. Otherwise what we will be showing on stage will be an illustration of a director’s diagnosis, the shape of a “performed passion,” if you will. Whereas this is a passion that must be lived through onstage, every night. I think that what Shakespeare wants us to be in the presence of, in the theatre, is the mystery of human life, of human character. Leontes is a great role because he is unknown to himself. That is his tragedy in the early part of the play. He is not a great man. He’s an ordinary man, burdened by vanity, insecurity, and a need to control. He thinks he knows what’s happening to him; he thinks he is the master of his own psyche, but he is not. And because he happens to be a king, with an enormous amount of inherited political, economic, and moral power, these ordinary human frailties are magnified and cause vast harm before he awakens to his errors.

ER: Final question: What do you hope your audiences will take away from the production?

LD: Relief—that it turned out all right. Pleasure—in the sheer delight of a play that is just so full of incident—so much happens! I want audiences to walk away with a sense of wonder at the capacity we have to love one another, and at the effort and leap of faith that is required for understanding and love actually to live in the world.
SHAKESPEARE’S GEOGRAPHY LESSON: Why Bohemia and Sicilia?

Places exist in our imagination just as much as they do on the map. It is in this mix of the real and the imaginary that Bohemia and Sicilia live in *The Winter’s Tale*. Juxtaposing historical facts and romanticized ideas about two real places, Shakespeare forges a setting to his play that comments on and contributes to the action.

Even though Shakespeare is often considered a genius, he has drawn criticism for his apparent ignorance of geography in *The Winter’s Tale*. In some editions of the text, Bohemia is described, at the top of Act 3, Scene 3, as “a desert country near the sea,” but the real Bohemia is a landlocked country. In Shakespeare’s defense, there was a brief period in history when a Bohemian king extended his territories as far as the Adriatic Sea. But, perhaps this debate is irrelevant because Shakespeare also toys with facts about Sicilia. The real Bohemia is no more a desert than there are harsh winters on the warm Italian island of Sicilia (which we know, in English, as Sicily).

The settings for this play can be traced back to the source material that Shakespeare used as inspiration: Greene’s *Pandosto* (1588). In *Pandosto*, a jealous king ruled over Bohemia, and Sicilia was the pastoral setting; Greene also placed the summer setting in Sicilia, which is traditionally depicted in literature as an island paradise. Shakespeare instead made Sicilia the wintry kingdom ruled by a jealous leader. There is a gap between the real Sicilia and Bohemia and the places called Sicilia and Bohemia in *The Winter’s Tale*, which draw from fact, but also exist on their own in the specific universe created by Shakespeare. The playwright was less interested in the actual geography of Sicilia and Bohemia than in how he might capitalize on the connotations of these places to create the complex story of *The Winter’s Tale*.  

A PASTORAL IMAGE FROM SAMUEL PALMER’S 1824 SKETCHBOOK. FROM *THE GREEN FUSE: PASTORAL VISION IN ENGLISH ART* BY JERROLD NORTHROP MOORE.
THE REAL SICILIA AND BOHEMIA
In reality, Sicilia and Bohemia are both regions in Europe. Sicilia is a Mediterranean island in the southern end of Italy. Although its current inhabitants speak Italian, they are proud to have an identity that’s different from the rest of their fellow Italians. Sicilia was the first territory the Romans conquered in 242 BCE, and later on in history, it became an independent state, rich and prosperous from maritime trading routes. Under King Roger II’s reign (1101–1112), Sicilia was one of the most powerful states in Europe, with a naval fleet much more impressive than England’s at that time. So in the Englishman’s mind, even as late as the beginning of the 16th century, Sicilia evoked a wealthy kingdom full of ports and ships. Shakespeare uses this perception: Leontes’ court has a classical Greco-Roman flavor (they talk of Jove and send envoys to the Delphic Oracle), and the people frequently go on sea journeys. The setting is simply described as “a sea-port in Sicilia” (3.1).

Bohemia is a region that comprises about two-thirds of today’s Czech Republic and shares borders with Germany and Austria. It used to be a largely autonomous state, part of the Holy Roman Empire. In the 14th century, around the same time that Sicilia dominated the Mediterranean, Bohemia was at the heart of the richest and most prosperous continental European empire. While Shakespeare was writing The Winter’s Tale, Bohemia, under the rule of Rudolf II (1575–1611), was enjoying unparalleled religious tolerance in a time when religious wars, due to the rise of Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation, were ripping Europe apart. In fact, many Englishman fled to Bohemia to benefit from this religious freedom.

This historical background may have informed the choice of the two settings. In contrast to rigid Sicilia, where Leontes is persecuting his subjects, Bohemia is a much more tolerant and free place and a safe refuge for the banished Perdita. Polixenes and Leontes appear as two equally powerful kings, the same power status and noble rank allowing them to be brothers in a friendly alliance.

In toying with history and geography, perhaps Shakespeare wanted to hint at the greater political situation, arguing for the attractiveness of religious tolerance by making Bohemia the sunnier place. In many ways in The Winter’s Tale, Bohemia and Sicilia are starkly contrasted: in Sicilia it’s winter, everyone’s always indoors, people are afraid; in Bohemia it’s summer, everyone’s outside, people are in love. Yet the picture is more complicated than that. In Bohemia it’s the end of summer, winter is fast approaching, while winter in Sicilia will not last forever. Leontes might be a tyrant, but Bohemia is not completely free either: Polixenes becomes a terrifying tyrant when his only son wants to marry a shepherdess.

However, looking at Bohemia and Sicilia simply through their differences is too simple. Even though these two locations seem like polar opposites, Shakespeare’s doing something more complicated: he presents nature as cyclical. Seasons come and go in both places; some people die, and some are born and the very lucky are reborn; some people part, and some just fall in love; love is lost and then regained. Shakespeare on one hand places the settings of Sicilia and Bohemia in opposition to each other and uses them to delineate between Leontes’ wintery, gloomy castle and Perdita’s flowery kingdom. On the other hand, Sicilia and Bohemia are ambiguous enough to suggest the possibility of change, the passage of time, and the cyclical nature of existence.

—ILINCA TAMARA TODORUT
ABOVE LEFT: MAP OF BOHEMIA IN THE FORM OF A ROSE, 1679–1682.
RIGHT: MAP OF SICILIA FROM THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY.
For the people of Shakespeare’s England, music was vital entertainment. Instead of playing computer games, going on Facebook, or listening to an iPod, people went to balls, dances, or recitals; music and dancing were enjoyed by people from all walks of life, from the king and his court to the farmer and his workers.

Still, it was considered vulgar for the upper classes to perform in public. That’s why in Shakespeare’s plays those who sing are servants, peasants, or professionals, and they do not articulate their own emotions, rather they sing on behalf of others. Those who do sing for themselves directly are usually drunk, mad, or socially subversive: Sir Toby Belch from *Twelfth Night* is a good example of this type of character. Most of the songs in Shakespeare’s plays were popular hits of the day. Shakespeare, ever the people’s playwright, knew exactly how to use music in a way that would make his plays more enjoyable for his audiences.

In Shakespeare’s plays music acts as a kind of theatrical punctuation helping communicate to the audience a shift in mood. The first part of *The Winter’s Tale* takes place in Sicilia. Austere Sicilia comes to be associated with discord and tragedy, and there is deliberate exclusion of music in this part of the play, a silence that a Shakespearean audience would definitely notice. However, when the play moves geographically, Bohemia explodes onto the stage with musical flourish.

On a back road deep in the Bohemian countryside, Autolycus enters singing. From this moment on, there are no fewer than six songs; two full-scale dances; and numerous references to people singing and learning music, dancing to the pipe and tabor, and birdsong in spring and summer. The concentration of music in Bohemia marks a holiday time when everyday rural work gives way to a time of rest and play. It is festival time, and the air is filled with the traditional unaffected singing of the tavern and field. That is until, in an irrational rage (similar in its fervor to Leontes’), Polixenes, King of Bohemia, decides to put an end to his son’s dalliance with a simple shepherdess. The music stops, and Bohemia, like Sicilia, falls silent.

In this production of *The Winter’s Tale* music will play a crucial role—a group of musicians will be on stage, participating in the action throughout. The production’s composer Matthew Suttor says, “Music will not be absent in the Sicilia of our production. The onstage musicians will map the disquieting emotional landscape through sound. When the production moves to Bohemia, our musicians will really let loose—the sounds will be percussive and earthy, celebrating freedom and pleasure.”

**THE MUSIC OF THE SOUL: HARMONY AND DISCORD IN *THE WINTER’S TALE*”**

In Shakespeare’s time philosophers and scientists alike believed that the world was a giant instrument upon which God played. When the instrument is in tune, peace and harmony reign, when out of tune, chaos and discord ensue. In *The Winter’s Tale* when Leontes becomes intoxicated with paranoia and jealousy, he commits a number of crimes against nature. First he imprisons his wife; then he attempts to have his own child killed, and finally he defies the gods by declaring, “There is no truth at all i’th’oracle” (3.2.137). These blasphemous acts throw the world of Sicilia off balance resulting in the deaths of Mamillius, Leontes’ only son and heir, and Hermione. Left without wife or heir, Leontes is forced to spend the next sixteen years repenting and atoning for his rash behavior. A devastating gloom settles over Sicilia, a kingdom now completely frozen in grief.

**TUNING INTO SHAKESPEARE:**

How Important is Music in *The Winter’s Tale*?

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*The man that hath no music in himself,*  
*Nor is not mov’d with concord of sweet sounds,*  
*Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;*  
*The motions of his spirit are dull as night,*  
*And his affections dark as Erebus:*  
*Let no such man be trusted.*

(*The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.83-88)
This same principle can also be applied to people. The phrase *Musica Humana* was used to describe a person’s inner music, i.e. how in tune his body is with his soul and his surroundings. The character at the center of much of the music making in *The Winter’s Tale* is the mischievous Autolycus, a rogue, thief, and travelling minstrel. In some ways Autolycus is the classic Shakespearean “fool;” he is very attuned to the world around him. Like the Fool in *King Lear*, at first glance, his comments seem light hearted and silly. But Autolycus’ songs mix things up—social ranks, the seasons, money, and gender. More importantly, in the humble, rural world of Bohemia, where singing is as natural as speaking, and far away from the confines of the royal court, his seemingly lighthearted lyrics contain big truths about the world of *The Winter’s Tale*, that “the red blood reigns in the winter’s pale” (4.3.4), and (as Leontes proves) that all men betray women, “Thou hast sworn my love to be. Thou hast sworn it more to me” (4.3.311-12).

There was a widespread belief at this time in the healing powers of music. “It is so powerful a thing that it ravisheth the soul,” said Robert Burton in his book written in 1611 called *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. It is no accident, therefore, that in *The Winter’s Tale*, it is music that reanimates Hermione, an act that restores balance and harmony to Sicilia:

Paulina: Music, awake her; strike! [Music] (5.3.98)

Indeed Hermione’s name itself is a pun on the word harmony. Her name perhaps helps emphasize her moral strength and innocence. She is a perfect example of *Musica Humana*, someone whose soul and body are in perfect tune.

—EMILY REILLY
THE WINTER’S (FAIRY) TALE:
The Stuff of Make Believe?

The term “fairy tale” was coined in 1698 by French author Madame d’Aulnoy and was quickly translated and adopted by the British over the course of the next century. There are many definitions of fairy tales and many ways in which these stories differ from folk tales and legends, but the general agreement is that the presence of magic and the unbelievable are essential components of the genre. Although the story does not necessarily need to include fairies or monsters, supernatural occurrences or fantastical protagonists are always at the heart of the fairy tale. The characters are stock figures, recognizable and familiar types, such as the fair princess or the wicked step mother. The characters are either entirely good or entirely bad, and they don’t tend to change over the course of the story. The good are usually rewarded and prevail at the end, and the wicked are punished, making the fairy tale a vehicle for moral instruction. The plot lines are simple and archetypal, involving a journey, a quest, or a test that the hero or heroine must go through, eventually prevailing through skill and virtue.

Even though The Winter’s Tale was written in the early 17th century, long before the term “fairy tale” was invented, Shakespeare was openly borrowing plot elements from these common stories. Magic is central to the plot, and there are many “unbelievable” things that happen in the play: Hermione disappears into Paulina’s keeping for sixteen years without Leontes ever suspecting a thing; poor Antigonus is ripped to pieces by a bear; and a statue seems to come to life. Plot elements, such as Perdita’s lost identity, are typical—a rehash of the familiar story of the lost royal baby raised by common folks. All of these things are much rarer in a serious play but more prevalent in stories told to pass the time or teach lessons to little children. The title of Shakespeare’s play tells us that it is a “tale” in the tradition of idle tales, fish tales, and old wives’ tales, which are fantastic and non-realistic stories.

But, in the theatre, as in this play, magic and real life go hand in hand. On top of the fairy tale skeleton and elements, Shakespeare created flesh and blood characters and a real human drama about mistakes and sorrow, love and joy. He took old stories, and he even took characters everybody recognized—the jealous king, the virtuous wife, the young couple in love, the clown—and he used them all to tell us a story filled with real, complex emotion.

The Winter’s Tale is a story about how a husband’s mad jealousy destroys his family’s happiness, and how it takes sixteen years of atonement before things can be patched up again. Hermione’s statue is not quite a fairy tale statue but magical nonetheless; she ages over those years, and lines form on her face. The characters themselves remark on the extraordinary circumstances in the play and call upon their similarities to fairy tales. Paulina says: “That she is living/ Were it but told you, should be hooted at/Like an old tale” (5.3). It’s not just an old tale. The actual miracle is not that a statue comes to life, but that Hermione forgives and returns to Leontes. The focus is at all times on the human element; the extraordinary occurrences are simply employed to drive the story. “It is requir’d/ You do awake your faith” (5.3.94-95), says Paulina.

—ILINCA TAMARA TODORUT

19TH-CENTURY ENGRAVING OF FLORIZEL AND PERDITA IN THE WINTER’S TALE.
ANTITHESIS

In Shakespeare’s poetry, there are times that two contrasting, or opposite, ideas or images can be juxtaposed in the same line or the same speech. For a play like The Winter’s Tale, this use of antithesis pervades not only the text, but almost every aspect of the play. The cold, harsh, indoor world of Sicilia is contrasted with the warm, earthy, outdoor world of Bohemia.

For an actor, identifying antithesis in the text is just one of many things that he or she might do to prepare. It will be important, when they are speaking the lines, to acknowledge how two opposite words or ideas can sit next to one another.

How do you think Shakespeare uses antithesis? What are all the opposing forces that you find in the story of The Winter’s Tale and in the production?

CAMILLO:
You pay a great deal too dear for what’s given freely. (1.1.17-18)

HERMIONE:
...Good my lords,
I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are; the want of which vain dew
Perchance shall dry your pities: but I have
That honourable grief lodg’d here which burns
Worse than tears drown... (2.1.107-112)

CAMILLO:
My lord, your sorrow was too sore laid on,
Which sixteen winters cannot blow away,
So many summers dry: scarce any joy
Did ever so long live; no sorrow
But kill’d itself much sooner. (5.3.49-53)
PROSE V. VERSE

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare uses both *prose* and *verse*. When Shakespeare is writing in verse, it means that the lines are metered, normally in iambic pentameter. Each line of speech typically has ten syllables or beats and follows a specific rhythm. If the lines of verse do not rhyme, it’s called *blank verse*. Other times, Shakespeare abandons the structure of verse and its rhythms and writes in prose.

Typically, in Shakespeare’s plays, the use of prose or verse can suggest a character’s class or social standing; clowns and servants often speak prose, and kings and courtiers traffic in verse. In comedies, prose is sometimes used more often, whereas verse goes hand-in-hand with tragedies. Nevertheless, there’s no hard-and-fast rule about when Shakespeare uses prose and when he decides to write verse. Instead, the actor must think about why Shakespeare has chosen a particular form and how the form of speech impacts meaning, tone, and storytelling.

For example, at the beginning of Act 4, Time speaks in verse. Note that this is one of the few times in *The Winter’s Tale* that Shakespeare uses rhyming verse.

**TIME:**

I that please some, try all: both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me, or my swift passage, that I slide
O’er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o’erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
To plant and o’erwhelm custom. (4.1.1-9)

Note the rhyming couplets.

10 syllables per line
To see the difference between prose and verse, reread Act 3, Scene 3. Compare how Antigonus speaks, in blank verse, as he leaves the child, and how the Shepherd speaks, in prose, upon the discovery.

**ANTIGONUS:**

....Blossom, speed thee well!
There lie, and there thy character: there these,
Which may, if fortune please, both breed thee, pretty,
And still rest thine. The storm begins: poor wretch,
That for thy mother's fault art thus expos'd
To loss and what may follow! Weep I cannot,
But my heart bleeds; and most accurs'd am I
To be by oath enjoin'd to this. Farewell!
The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
A lullaby too rough: I never saw
The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour!
Well may I get abroad! This is the chase;
I am gone forever. (3.3.46-57)

**SHEPHERD:**

I would there no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would
sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with
child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting—Hark you now! Would any but
these boiled-brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather? They
have scared away two of my best sheep, which I fear the wolf will sooner find
than the master: if anywhere I have them, 'tis by the sea-side, browzing of ivy.
[Seeing the babe.] Good luck, and 't be thy will, what have we here? Mercy
on 's, a barne! A very pretty barne! A boy or a child, I wonder? A pretty one; a very
pretty one. Sure, some scape: though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-
gentlewoman in the scape... (3.3.59-73)
At one time labeled a “problem play”—a moniker still sometimes attributed to several of Shakespeare’s other genre-bending dramas—*The Winter’s Tale* is now regarded as near kin to three other late-career plays: *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and *Pericles*. All four works move from catastrophe to restoration and forgiveness. Like these other three plays, *The Winter’s Tale* has long defied classification. The play’s first three acts could be mistaken for a tragedy: Leontes’ unhinged jealousy, recalling that of *Othello*, alienates his closest friend, exiles his daughter, and kills his son and (seemingly) wife. Only Perdita’s survival snatches the third act from the brink of despair. Yet Act 4 hurls headlong into the dominion of comedy, complete with clever tricksters, dim-witted yokels, and young lovers flouting cantankerous parents’ authority.

The comedic fourth act of *The Winter’s Tale* launches the play into a metamorphosis, completely changing the tone of the play and its potential outcome. Bohemia functions as what the Shakespearean scholar Northrop Frye calls a “green world.” Like the Forest of Arden of *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s fairy-vexed wood, Bohemia offers respite from an unjust political authority that has subverted the natural order. Not only does Leontes’ madness destroy those closest to him, it disrupts the cycle of fertility, depriving his kingdom of an heir and hence a secure future. Only when Shakespeare shifts the action to Bohemia do change and growth again become possible. Perdita and Florizel’s healthy sexuality inverts Leontes’ poisonous obsession; their union offers hope for new life.
and the Pastoral Tradition

Shakespeare’s green worlds trace their lineage back to the pastoral literature of classical antiquity. The term “pastoral” derives from the ancient Greek word for shepherd, and shepherds—distant ancestors to Perdita’s foster family—feature prominently in the works of Hesiod and Virgil, as well as their Renaissance descendents Tasso, Guarini, and Lyly. Trumpeting country life’s simple pleasures and unvarnished virtues, pastoral writers implicitly criticize the city’s deceit and corruption. However, the countryside’s proximity to raw nature augurs danger as well as promise. Along with marauding bears, satyrs (mythical man-goat hybrids) prowl the forests of pastoral drama—their attempts to rape the female protagonists often only barely averted. Viewed within the pastoral tradition, The Winter’s Tale proves less of an anomaly: the genre has always straddled the fence between tragedy and comedy.

Like Shakespeare’s other pastoral dramas, The Winter’s Tale concludes with a retreat from the green world to the court. In the comedies, this homecoming initiates the restoration of a stable social order, symbolized by the young lovers’ marriage. In The Winter’s Tale, it heralds a return from death, of which Hermione’s mysterious reappearance is but the most overt manifestation. At the act’s beginning, all Sicilia lies embalmed in a metaphorical permafrost, as though the royal family’s demise has frozen time itself. Sixteen years have diminished neither Leontes’ remorse nor Paulina’s resentment. Perdita and Florizel’s arrival breaks winter’s spell, loosing the crescendo of reconciliations that follow. Yet not all is restored: the lines on Hermione’s face testify to the cost of Leontes’ error, and Mamillius’ death proves no illusion. Rather than celebrating the unblemished joy of young love, Shakespeare closes with a more sober spectacle: a middle-aged woman embracing and forgiving the husband who shattered their family.

—MONICA ACHEN
BEFORE

1. In the director’s interview, on pages 6–8, Liz Diamond talks about the challenge an actor playing Leontes faces—the breadth of emotional transformations Shakespeare demands of the character. Read aloud the following Leontes speeches: 2.1.39-45, 2.2.185-198, 2.3.123-140, and 5.1.7-11. When you watch Yale Rep’s production, observe Leontes’ transformations and discuss as a class whether the actor was successful at conveying that range of emotions.

2. As in many of Shakespeare's plays, disguises are used in The Winter's Tale for various purposes: to gather information, to help facilitate romantic relationships, and to travel in different social circles. In small groups, create a list of other instances in literature—including Shakespeare’s other plays—where disguises are used to similar effect.

3. In The Winter's Tale, Shakespeare notes the passage of time—sixteen years—through text (See 4.1.1-32). As a class, discuss the tools a director, a team of designers, and company of actors might use to show the time that has elapsed. After seeing the show, talk about what worked or didn’t.

AFTER

1. On page 14 in the guide, in the article “The Winter’s (Fairy) Tale,” the author writes, “Magic is central to [this play’s] plot, and there are many ‘unbelievable’ things that happen in the play.” Go back and read the synopsis on page 1, and then discuss as a group whether you felt the director and team of designers fulfilled those moments of magic.

2. As stated in the article found on pages 12–13 in the guide, music will play a crucial role in Yale Rep’s production of The Winter’s Tale. Which moments for you were enhanced emotionally by the inclusion of music or sound effects? When was the use of music most successful?

3. The Winter’s Tale embodies a wide spectrum of universal themes: jealousy, the power of forgiveness, class conflict, and rebirth, to name a few. In small groups, discuss the resonance these same themes have within the context of contemporary politics and/or your community.
### RESOURCES

**BOOKS**


**WEBSITES**

NEA Shakespeare in American Communities

shakespeareinamericancommunities.org

In Search of Shakespeare:

Shakespeare in the Classroom

pbs.org/shakespeare/educators

Royal Shakespeare Company

rsc.org.uk/education

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

shakespeare.palomar.edu

SPEAK THE SPEECH:

Universal Shakespeare Broadcasting

speak-the-speech.com/winterstalenew.htm

Shakespeare at Yale, Spring 2012

shakespeare.yale.edu

**STUDY GUIDES**

National Arts Centre English Theatre

artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/wintale_guide.pdf

Folger Shakespeare

folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=3097

American Repertory Theater

americanrepertorytheater.org/ wt-video

americanrepertorytheater.org/files/ Winter's%20Tale%20Study%20Guide.pdf

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley

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