



*Steel City Shakespeare Center
and the West View Hub present*



The Heavy Gait of Night

*a story of grief, passion, and family
in Shakespeare's England*

a new play
by Jeffrey Chips
directed by
Catherine Baird

*Friday, March 31
Saturday, April 1
7:00 pm*

*West View Hub
435 Perry Highway
Pittsburgh, PA 15229*

**This play discusses the sudden death
of a child and contains adult language**

The logo for CHIPS dental associates is centered at the top. It features the word "CHIPS" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. To its right, the words "dental associates" are written in a smaller, grey, lowercase sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a white background that is framed by a faint, light grey oval border. The background of the entire advertisement is a textured, brownish-gold surface with dark, irregular splatters and a large, dark, curved shape on the left side.

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Cast

Will "Shaggy" Shakespeare:
Bob Colbert

Richard "Dick" Burbage/
Anne Hathaway Shakespeare:
Hannah Ruth Moss

Alexander "Xander" Cooke/
Hamnet Shakespeare:
Ella Mizera

Philip "Phil" Herlowe:
Dionysius Akeem

John Shakespeare/
Will "Uncle Campy" Kempe:
Tom Sarp

Note From the Playwright

This play is not a tragedy.

That phrase has been the continuous mantra we've adopted throughout the process of bringing this play to life. It's something I remained cognizant of while I've asked you, kind audience, to sit and listen to my words for two full hours. Even if the subject matter is perhaps the worst thing imaginable in the death of a young child, I wanted to tell this story in such a way that it portrayed grief as an active, ever-evolving process, but also as an ordinary, everyday thing that we all experience. The great bards of our current day and age, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (I'm only half kidding in this characterization), put it best in their series *WandaVision*, asking, "What is grief if not love persevering?" That's the story I want to tell -- not so much a voyeuristic approach to a family's suffering, but the story of a family moving through a difficult time with plenty of sadness, yes, but also humor and grace in finding the courage to move through everyday life.

While you may find that the characters in this play speak in a markedly 21st century American vernacular, complete with a few four-letter words (sorry, Mom!), I worked hard to make sure the history is accurate -- or at the least, I was very conscious of where and why I took creative liberties with the real history. We know remarkably little about Shakespeare's life, especially his family life, but the few details we do know are great fodder for storytelling. For example, we know that Shakespeare worked in London, likely spending the majority of his time there, while his wife, Anne, lived in Stratford-upon-Avon, about 100 miles away, raising their three children. Church records indicate that Hamnet Shakespeare died in August of 1596, likely from the plague. We also know, based on performance records, that Shakespeare likely wrote two plays in 1596 -- one his most produced and arguably most popular play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a lesser known and seldom produced play in *King John*. The general scholarly consensus is that given the correlation between performance records and the date of Hamnet's death, plus the entire Hubert-Arthur plotline that dominates the final three acts of the play, *King John* was likely the first play he wrote after such a harrowing, life-altering personal tragedy.

For me, this process actually began in 2018, which feels like a million years ago. After going through a painful personal loss and a rather humiliating professional setback in a short period of time, I found myself in need of a creative outlet to help me process the grief I was feeling. I'd been fascinated with this particular chapter of Shakespeare's biography for some time, and it seemed like a good opportunity to try my hand at playwrighting. Over the course of about three months, these words poured out of me without feeling any sense of writer's block or imposter syndrome (something I'm feeling heavily today as I present this to all of you). Several years and a global pandemic later, I'm incredibly proud to have found a creative partner in Catherine Baird to help bring this story to life.

There are too many people to thank for their support and encouragement, but I'll do my best to name as many as I can. First, to Catherine, Bob, Hannah, Dionysius, Tom, and Ella, thank you for your talents and generosity. Also, a special thanks to Sebastian Midence, Catherine Gowl, Ashley Nemit, Michael Mykita, and Darrin Mosley, whose voices I had in my mind as I wrote these characters and were kind enough to read the play to me back in 2018 and provide some very helpful feedback. I could not have brought this work to the stage without the encouragement from Jim Warren, who has been an amazing friend and mentor, helping me through some very tough times and championing this little play from the very beginning. My parents, John and Mary Beth Chips, have always been my biggest cheerleaders, instilling many of the values embodied by the fictional John Shakespeare in this play without all of the doubts. And lastly, my wife, Megan, the real-life inspiration behind Anne, and my three sons, Samuel, Isaac, and Joshua, who provide me with endless inspiration and wonder, always reminding me that as magical as the theater can be, life is always better.

Aberedw!

Jeffrey Chips

Note From the Director

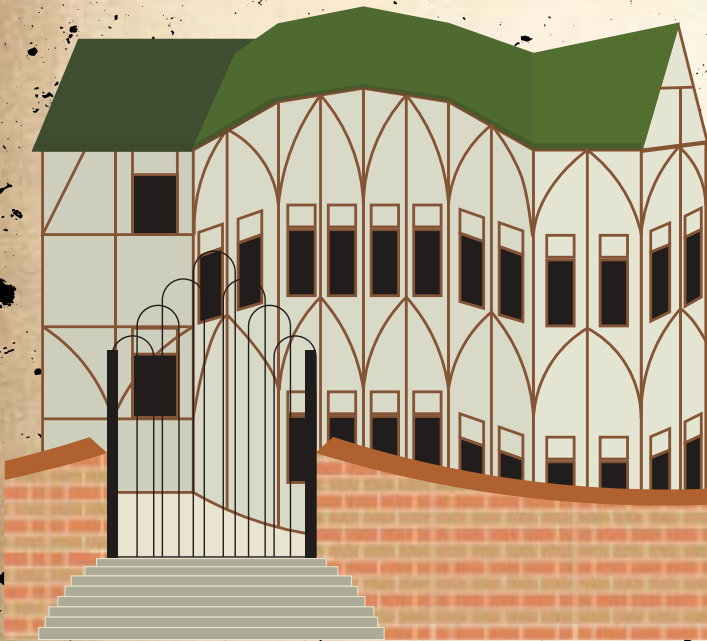
Any artistic endeavor is an act of courage, but I believe that creating an original work is the pinnacle bravery. I am beyond proud of my dear friend and collaborator, Jeffrey Chips, for writing such a gorgeous piece of theatre and for taking the leap to share it with the world. Thank you, Jeff, for trusting this cast, our community, and me to workshop and premiere your play.

In the fall of 2020, I was working on a virtual production of *Cymbeline* with Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks under the direction of Jeffrey Chips himself. The week before our final performances, my sister, Julia, somewhat unexpectedly died. Because of the virtual nature of our show and the generosity of the production team, I was able to travel to Boston to be with my family and perform our final show through Zoom within an hour after Julia's COVID-precautioned drive-by visitation. What the rest of the *Cymbeline* team probably didn't realize was that it was much more than a "show must go on" mentality; being able to do what I love among friends tethered me to reality amidst a tumultuously surreal time.

That period nudged me to accept how healing art can be, both in the immediate frenzy of tragedy, as well as over time. We would have celebrated Julia's 25th birthday this past week, and it is hard to believe that Julia hasn't been with us for her last THREE birthdays now. However, Julia freaking LOVED her birthday; she would start telling strangers "my birthday is coming" a good six months in advance. Premiering this play at this time feels serendipitous to me personally, and I hope you find some connections for yourselves as well.

Losing a young person is tragic no matter the time. Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, is known to have died of the plague. Today, our children are not only dealing with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but numerous plagues threatening their physical and emotional well-being, such as gun violence, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, racial and socioeconomic inequity, and people in positions of power acting in their own interests rather than on behalf of those they claim to serve. May this story be a beacon of hope for our youngest generation and those who love them.

Thank you for supporting live theatre,
Catherine aka "Big Cat" :)





Bob Colbert

WILL SHAKESPEARE

Bob Colbert (he/him) Bob Colbert (He/Him) is thrilled to be returning to Steel City Shakespeare Center after performing in *Pericles* in 2021 and directing and performing in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 2022. Bob has also performed with such Pittsburgh theater companies as Poor Yorick's Players, Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks, and Gemini Children's Theatre. At Gemini, Bob performs in both their mainstage shows and their field trip/school outreach program. Enjoy the show!





Hannah Ruth Moss

RICHARD BURBAGE/
ANNE HATHAWAY SHAKESPEARE

Hannah Ruth Moss (she/her) is a Pittsburgh transplant, thrilled to be back on stage after a long hiatus. This is her first Steel City Shakespeare show, however she enjoyed coaching in the Winter Showcase and will be directing the upcoming full production of *Emma* in May. Hannah is a graduate of Indiana University Bloomington where she studied Theatre with an emphasis on acting and costume design. After college, Hannah co-founded and managed Theatre of the People, a nonprofit inclusive community theatre, where she honed her Directing, Acting, Design, and nonprofit administration skills, before relocating to Pittsburgh to raise her two children, Henry and EJ. She would like to thank them for their support, as well as Jamie and Brandon who have encouraged her and taken care of her kiddos while she rehearses. Hannah would like to dedicate this performance to her grampa, Marvin, who passed away in January and who was always her biggest fan, known to shout "That's My Granddaughter!" during curtain calls. This one's for you, Grampa.



Ella Mizera

ALEXANDER COOKE/
HAMNET SHAKESPEARE

Ella Mizera (she/her) is excited to work on the world premiere of *The Heavy Gait of Night*! She is a junior studying theater and nonprofit management at the University of Pittsburgh, and is the co-founder of the Youth Shakespeare Society of Pittsburgh. *Heavy Gait* marks her third production with SCSC after *Macbeth* (Malcolm) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mrs. Ford). Other credits include Food for Groundlings' *Hamlet* (Ophelia) and Pitt Stages' *Emilia* (Lord Howard). She will also play Harriet in SCSC's *Emma* this May. Ella hopes you enjoy the show!



Dionysius Akeem

PHILIP HENSLowe

Dionysius Akeem (he/him) is proud to work with Steel City Shakespeare Center again after performing in the reading of *The Letter From the Birmingham Jail* in 2018. Dionysius studied acting for theatre and film at CCAC South campus and has since worked on T.V shows and films such as *12 Desperate Hours*, *Gone*, *An American Pickle*; and most recently *American Rust*. Today he continues to work with Docherty talent agency pursuing a professional career as a performer.



Tom Sarp

JOHN SHAKESPEARE/
WILL KEMPE

Tom Sarp (he/him) is excited to be working with Steel City Shakespeare again after playing Van Helsing in *Dracula*. Tom holds a BFA in Theatre Arts from Point Park University. He has performed in NYC, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh. He was a co-creator of the Off Broadway 4 year smash hit comedy *Grandma Sylvia's Funeral* in which he played the role he wrote of Fredo Iannuzzi . While in NYC he also performed in stand-up comedy and comedy skits at Caroline's, Stand Up NY, and The Comedy Cellar and was involved in stage productions and readings of new works at the 12th Street Theatre. More recent roles include El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* (The Theatre Factory and The Cabaret Theatre), John Jacob Astor in *Titanic* (Split Stage), Badchan -Tattooing Prisoner in *The Devil's Arithmetic* (New Hazlett), Father Jeremy in *Celibacy* and George in *Funicello's Birthday*, both with The Cabaret Theatre, and Foreman / Juror # 1 in *Twelve Angry Men* (Mckeesport Little Theatre), Selsdon in *Noises Off* (Valley Players), Dr. Everett Scott in *Rocky Horror Musical* (BMG Productions Pgh) as well as a number of other professional and regional stage productions in PA, CA, and NY. Tom thanks his wife and their 3 children Adam, Nina, and Elena for all their love and support.



Catherine Baird

DIRECTOR

Catherine Baird (she/her) is honored to help bring Jeff's heartfelt play to life! Past Steel City Shakespeare Center adventures include performing in the one-woman show *The Twelve Dates of Christmas* and *Macbeth*, as well as teaching with the Youth Academy. She recently started dipping her toes into directing with *Newsies, Jr.* and *The Spongebob Musical* at the North Allegheny School District, and she serves as a devised theatre teaching artist in schools with Quantum Theatre. National Tour: Jump with Jill. Pittsburgh theatre: Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks, New Hazlett CSA Series, New Renaissance Theatre Company, Pittsburgh New Works Festival. Regional theatre: PlayMakers Repertory Company, the Hangar Theatre, Broadway Series South. BA, UNC-Chapel Hill. catherinelaurenbaire.com





Jeffrey Chips

PLAYWRIGHT

Jeffrey Chips (he/him) is the Founder and Artistic Director of Steel City Shakespeare Center, having served as producer, director, writer, and/or performer on over fifteen productions, including *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, *As You Like It*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Richard III*, *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad*, *The Tempest*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*. He has also directed productions of *Cymbeline* and *King Lear* with Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks and previously worked as an understudy with the American Shakespeare Center on productions of *The Tempest*, *Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Richard III*. He holds a BA in theatre from Allegheny College and an MLitt and MFA in Shakespeare and Performance from Mary Baldwin University, earned while training at the American Shakespeare Center. He is a resident of West View and serves on the staff and board of directors of the West View Hub, and thanks his wife, Megan, and sons, Samuel, Isaac, and Joshua, for all of their love and inspiration. He would like to dedicate this production to his grandmother Rosemary Lenahan and to his dear friend Ron Siebert, who will both live on in his heart.

Characters in the Play



William "Will," aka "Shaggy," Shakespeare (1564-1616) was a player, writer, and shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who became the King's Men in 1603. Born in Stratford-upon-Avon to John and Elizabeth Shakespeare (nee Arden), he maintained a professional life in London and a home life in Stratford with his wife, Anne, and three children, Susanna, Judith, and Hamnet.

Richard "Dick" Burbage (1567-1619) Son of James Burbage, who was a pioneer of the London theater scene. Richard was the leading actor of the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men, having originated pretty much all of the major leading roles – Richard III, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, etc. As the leading actor, he was also assumed the roles that we would now consider director and artistic director.



Alexander "Xander" Cooke (died 1614) a prominent boy player in the Lord Chamberlain's Men who became a shareholder in the King's Men. It's believed he originated roles like Juliet, Beatrice, and other Shakespearean leading ladies.



Philip "Phil" Henslowe (1550-1616) A London businessman who had interests in the theater. His best contribution to theater history was his intricately detailed diary, which shed light on all of the day-to-day theater business dealings.

Anne Hathaway Shakespeare (1556-1623)

Sadly, as with many women in history, Anne Hathaway's story is largely forgotten. We know that in 1582, when she was 24 years old, she married an 18-year-old William Shakespeare and was three months' pregnant at the time. We also know that her husband bequeathed their "second-best bed" to her in his will. Much of the rest of her life is pure conjecture.



John Shakespeare (1531-1601) in addition to being a glover, he was also involved in the municipal government, serving as alderman, constable, and ale taster. He also landed in legal trouble in the 1570s for illegally trading wool. Despite a somewhat spotty public reputation in his youth, his son William secured a coat of arms for him in 1596, the same year this play takes place.





Will "Uncle Campy" Kempe (1560-1603) The resident clown and shareholder of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, originated the roles of Bottom, Dogberry, and Falstaff (though there's some disagreement on that). Before joining the Lord Chamberlain's Men, he gained notoriety as a traveling player in touring companies. He departed the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1600, right around the time of *Hamlet* and was replaced by Robert Armin.

Hamnet Shakespeare (1585-1596) One of the three Shakespeare children, along with Susanna and his twin sister, Judith. Hamnet died from the "black death" at 11 years old. We know very little about his life, but especially after 1596, many of Shakespeare's plays show parents grieving over a lost or dead child. It is believed Hamnet's death served as his tragic inspiration.





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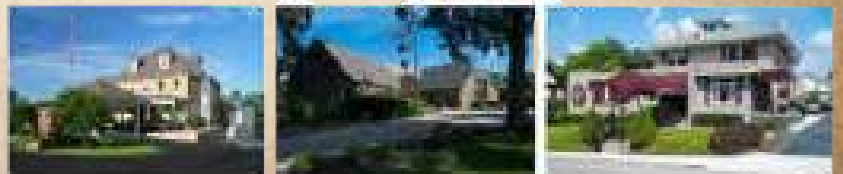
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Acknowledgements

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Henry V

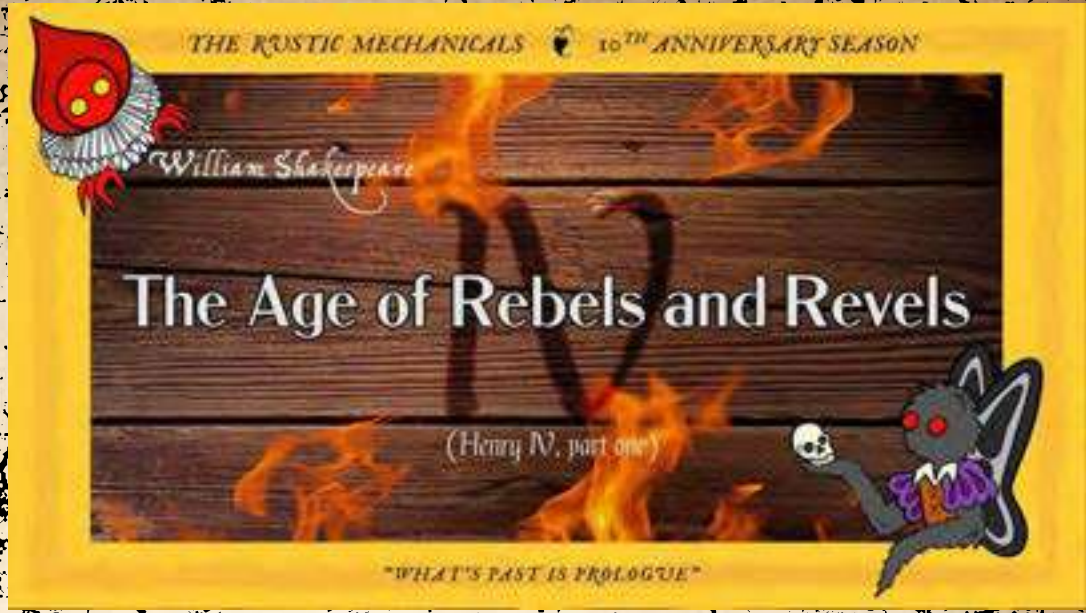
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