



A Conversation with the Founders of Fiasco Theater



How Downsizing Leads To Supersizing Shakespeare

By Eric Minton

It's not just *Measure for Measure*—it's Fiasco's *Measure for Measure*. And, oh my, the last show The Folger is producing this season is Fiasco's version of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Shakespeare's most maligned play—most maligned by me, at least—is suddenly a compelling offering because Fiasco is doing it. Not only that but, as a bonus Folger season subscriber, we get discounted tickets to Fiasco's *Cymbeline* on the heels of *Two Gents'* run.

That *Cymbeline*, which had nearly 200 Off-Broadway performances from 2011–2012 and became the critics' darling of the entire New York theater scene, has come to define Fiasco Theater as a company because of the man-

Above: The Fiasco cast in *Cymbeline*. Left to right, Jessie Austrian, Noah Brody, Andy Grotelueschen, Ben Steinfeld, Emily Young, and Paul Coffey. Photo by Ari Mintz, Fiasco Theater.

ner in which it was done: with just six actors and a single multiuse trunk for a set. In proximity to the megaproduction *Spider-Man*, Fiasco's pared-down but still-dynamic *Cymbeline*—not just Shakespeare but obscure Shakespeare—became a counterpoint to the problem-plagued, critically-savaged, big-name, big-bomb musical and heightened both *Cymbeline*'s success and Fiasco's brand. As with any hot brand, we eagerly anticipate what they will do with Shakespeare the next time.

In fact, what they do with Shakespeare is Shakespeare. Every time.

"We're trying to listen to the play as much as we can and tease out what we think is going on thematically," says Ben Steinfeld, co-founder along with Jessie Austrian and Noah Brody of Fiasco Theater. "Once we've hooked into what the underlying vocabulary and architecture is, then we can talk about the handful of things that we think are really going on in the show and decide how to try to capitalize on that with the way we put it on stage."

This dedication to the text first informs how actors are doubled in various parts, not only logistically but also thematically (in fact, thematic fealty trumps logistics, in some cases). It also informs their sets. As much as the acting was lauded in *Cymbeline*, a trunk designed by Jacques Roy received the lion's share of the show's critical acclaim. It served as the set and a multitude of props, which was fitting because it not only proved practical but illustrated an allegorical arc of the play (or at least a sick pun).

Having not seen their *Cymbeline* but hearing so much about it, I snagged the chance to see *Measure for Measure* at the New Victory Theater in February and settled in to see what six actors with six doors would do with one of my favorite Shakespeare plays. In addition to the three company founders, the cast included Paul L. Coffey, Andy Grotelueschen, and Emily Young, who were also in *Cymbeline*. I saw great acting, yes;



Jessie Austrian



Ben Steinfeld



Noah Brody

ingenious doubling, definitely; clever use of doors, absolutely. However, what most struck me was how textually pure this staging turned out to be—excepting the need to drop a key character in the climactic wrap-up scene—and how well it highlighted the internal and interpersonal moral and social conundrums Shakespeare explores in this comedy as the six doors formed a variety of urban settings while illustrating the nature of human desires, hidden and exposed. I didn't walk away marveling that I had just seen Fiasco Shakespeare in a cleverly sparse performance; I walked away exulting that I had seen pure Shakespeare in a thoroughly-studied, multifaceted production.

It's a seeming contradiction all the more pronounced when you look at the company's current repertoire. Aside from an early production of *Twelfth Night*, its three commercial productions are three of Shakespeare's rarely produced plays (the company also has produced Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* with 10 actors and a pianist). "We haven't actually looked at each other and said, 'Hey, let's find these problematic plays or plays that aren't so popular,'" says Brody. "They are actually the ones that made the most sense to us based upon the cast, the people that we have available, and the things we find interesting about those plays."

"Interesting things" include subject matter, theme, content. Another criteria would be the play's ensemble quality, not just whether the work is in itself an ensemble piece but also how well its characters can be doubled and tripled to create an ensemble piece. "We wanted to make it worth actors' while to come on board with us, so we wanted to double and triple as many parts as possible to make it a real ensemble show," Austrian says. "So part of why we create tracks that double and triple characters is so that each actor gets a lot to work on, and nobody plays a spear carrier who waits off stage for two hours doing a crossword puzzle."

The primary criteria, though, are "plays that have parts that we really want to play," Brody says. "We self-identify as actors first."

Fiasco Theater's roots began with the Brown University/Trinity Rep MFA Acting Program. The actors met there and began collaborating on projects, and when, with their MFA degrees, they headed out into the world of commercial theater and teaching jobs, they discovered too little interesting in what little work they were getting. So, they began collaborating on various projects, starting with a workshop production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 2007. The first of their Shakespeare projects to make it to a commercial stage was *Cymbeline* at the 50-seat Access Theater in New York City in 2009. Once *Cymbeline's* 15-performance run concluded, Fiasco's members moved on, so they thought, to their next project, an eight-person *Twelfth Night* at Access in the spring of 2010.

But there was particularly strong magic in their *Cymbeline*; before *Twelfth Night's* run began, they learned that Theater for a New Audience wanted to pick up *Cymbeline* for its 2011 season. In the fall of that year, it was revived at the Barrow Street Theater and would also do a run at The Broad Stage in Los Angeles. The company mounted *Into the Woods* for the McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton, N.J. last May, and this May Fiasco is taking up residence at The Fol-

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ger with *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and yet another revival of *Cymbeline* with the original cast (for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Zachary Fine is joining the ensemble, replacing Steinfeld in the acting troupe though Steinfeld is co-directing the play). *Into The Woods* is also heading for an L.A. run and then scheduled to open in New York next winter.

Upon seeing their *Measure for Measure*, knowing about their *Cymbeline*, and anticipating their *Two Gents*, I endeavored to interview members of the company for Shakespeareances.com. This came in a phone call with the three cofounders, Austrian, Brody, and Steinfeld, on the evening of March 25. They had just finished their New Victory Theater run and were turning full attention to staging *Two Gents* in The Folger's Elizabethan theater. Many of their ideas for the production had yet to fully gestate at the time of the interview. Steinfeld could only spend about 20 minutes with us—he was calling from a train—and the other two didn't have much more time than that, so I focused first on the Shakespearean foundation of their work and followed up with some email questions later [which appear in brackets in the interview].

April 24, 2014

First of all, I saw your *Measure for Measure* and loved it.

BEN: Thank you.

I've not seen your *Cymbeline* but I will be seeing it here at The Folger when you do it, as well as the *Two Gents*. In listing those three plays, I am always struck by the fact that you've done *Cymbeline*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—extremely popular plays, those are, [Laughter] the ones that everybody does, the ones that everybody loves—

BEN: Right, right.

So how do you choose your plays? I know you did *Twelfth Night* some time ago, and you can give me the context for that one. How did you choose *Cymbeline*, *Measure for Measure*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*? Where does that come from?

NOAH: We are all actors. We self-identify as actors first. We choose plays based upon a series of criteria. First of all, plays that have parts that we really want to play, with interesting subject matter, theme, and content. We look for plays that can function as ensemble pieces, either because they are by their nature, or because we craft them into ensemble plays through our understanding of them, the way we have a tendency to double and triple [thematically].

We haven't actually looked at each other and said, "Hey, let's find these problematic plays or plays that aren't so popular." They are actually the ones that made the most sense to us based upon the cast, the people that we have available, and the things we find interesting about those plays. But it is interesting that it has turned out that those plays are among the most problematic to successfully stage.

I'll leave it at that, if you guys want to jump in.

JESSIE: Yeah, that's what I would have said, too. Ben, do you have anything you want to add?

BEN: No, I think that's it. We pick plays that can be done as ensemble pieces and that have lots of good parts. That's the primary criteria.

[VIA EMAIL: Noah mentioned among the criteria for choosing the plays that, as actors, there are certain parts you guys want to play. What parts in particular did you three pursue from the outset in *Cymbeline*, *Measure*, and *Two Gents*? Does casting further evolve during the full-cast collaboration process?

JESSIE: I was dying to play Imogen in 2009; that was a major driving factor, I think. Yes, the casting conversation is evolving as the company evolves. Now that we have more than one show on the horizon we're trying to take into consideration what challenges each of us are looking for and to balance out the casting in relation to what parts people got to the play in the previous show.]

OK, so let's talk *Cymbeline* first, that's your first really, really big hit. There are so many parts in that, so many characters, and since I can't visualize it, how difficult was that to get down to just six people, especially that last scene?

JESSIE: It was our very first project, we were this tiny little company, the three of us got together and wanted to make a company, and we wanted to do *Cymbeline* because we were all excited by the text and the parts we wanted to play. We wanted to make it worth actors'



Iachimo (Ben Stenfield, center) offers a wager to Posthumous (right) in Fiasco's *Cymbeline*. Looking on, from left, are Emily Young, Andy Grotelueschen, and Paul Coffey. At the center is another of the production's stars, the trunk designed by Jacques Roy. Photo by Ari Mintz, Fiasco Theater.

while to come on board with us, so we wanted to double and triple as many parts as possible to make it a real ensemble show, so part of why we create tracks that double and triple characters is so that each actor gets a lot to work on, and nobody plays a spear carrier who waits off stage for two hours doing a crossword puzzle. We wanted it to be a real ensemble show where everybody was invested and had something to really challenge them as an actor.

Part of it was math, figuring out how few people could we do it with so that we had something to chew on. From there, we looked at what made it interesting in terms of characters doubling, to see the same actor play two very different parts thematically. And it made sense for that show because one of the big thematic hooks for us is it's about the limits of belief and seeming. The roles lined up thematically because so much of the play's content is about thinking

something is one thing because it seems that way on the outside but is actually something different on the inside. So, thematically we chose to have Imogen as the only actor who doesn't double. She's sort of at the center of the story, and she also dresses like a boy, so she inherently doubles in the play anyway. And then the other five actors all double or triple.

Which is similar to what you did in *Measure for Measure* with the Duke going into disguise.

JESSIE: Yep.

In *Measure for Measure*, one thing I noticed and actually put in my review was that the parts you played were almost opposites: Isabella was Mistress Overdone, that kind of thing. Was that intentional or was that just the way you divided out the script?

NOAH: That was absolutely intentional. We were sort of looking at *Measure for Measure* as a play in which characters inhabited three different spheres to more or less degrees: the

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head, the heart, and the guts or the groin. We were very interested in actors having tracks in which they would live in completely opposite worlds and how that would resonate with the audience. Since all these characters are having to inhabit one extreme or the other or to deal with the confluence and conflict of their separate worlds, that would have an interesting thematic resonance for us.

Is there something we can expect with that on *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as well?

BEN: Yeah. All the [doubling] choices we try to relate to what we think is going on in the play. So, the doubling that we're doing in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* has mostly to do with servants and masters, which is one of the big themes in the play. So, what we try to have is a situation where we have three actors who play Julia and Proteus and Valentine, and then three actors who play a servant to or master of, or rival of those characters. So, for example, the woman who plays Lucetta also plays Silvia, so she goes from being

Julia's servant to being her superior in terms of status. Then we have the actor playing Speed, who serves Valentine, becomes Thurio, who is Valentine's rival for Sylvia. Does that make sense?

Yes, it does.

So the doubling is based on what we might call status, but primarily it's the idea of having servants and masters and how to reverse those polarities with the casting.

Is it six of you for *Two Gents*?

BEN: That's right.

[VIA EMAIL: Following on Fiasco’s approach to thematic doubling, Shakespeare had a larger company than six and, by the time of *Measure for Measure* was writing for a specific troupe of actors, as he also probably did with *Cymbeline*. So, I don’t expect that you are in any way following his approach to casting, but are you nevertheless gleaning what might be intentional character juxtapositions in his plays from the fact that you are doubling in such a way?

JESSIE: Yes, there are clearly plays with tracks where doubling seems apparent, or at least easy, so it’s quite possible Shakespeare’s company doubled those particular parts as well. Sylvia/Lucetta felt like a no-brainer in that regard for *Two Gents*. And I love productions of *Lear* that double Cordelia and the Fool, which seems likely to have been written to do so. Scholars know much more about this than I do though.]

It actually happened that someone came and saw our show and said, “I’m going to put you in my season, kid.” Really, really remarkable.

You’ve brought up themes. In *Measure for Measure*, you had the six doors representing the city and the different doors in cities and what’s inside and what’s outside the doors, the access and nonaccess, what’s behind closed doors but you can still get back there, and all that.

BEN: That’s right

I was very much taken by—and *Measure for Measure* is one of my favorite plays—very much taken with how well you guys—and I’m no scholar by any means—but how well you guys really capture Shakespeare’s thematic arc in that play, all the different allegories that he brings out. How studied are you in Shakespeare? Did you come into the play that way or did this come out of the rehearsal process?

BEN: I’ll just jump in real quick on that. We’ve all studied Shakespeare academically in college, but the work that we do on the intellectual aspects in the play really comes through workshops and rehearsals and group discussions. We’re trying to listen to the play as much as we can and tease out what we think is going on thematically. So, rather than kind of sitting around and talking about it, which we do a fair amount of, what we really try to do is receive what signals the play is sending us about what kind of initiatives and ideas are imbedded in it from the opening moments of the show all the way through the end, and once we’ve hooked into what the underlying vocabulary and architecture is, then we can talk about the handful of things that we think are really going on in the show and decide how to try to capitalize on that with the way we put it on stage.

Does it happen in part because you are a six-person repertory?

BEN: How do you mean?

As opposed to 12 actors suddenly showing up for a reading.

BEN: Oh, yes yes, a lot of it is definitely based on our long pair of relationships that we have with each other from grad school and our training together and the fact that we learned how to make theater together, so we’ve been having these conversations for a long, long time.

JESSIE: [There's a] quote that went something like, "There is no limit to what can be achieved when no one person gets the credit." We really work as an ensemble to try to tease out together what we think Shakespeare was after, which, for us, has proven much more fruitful and easier than any one person trying to have all the ideas alone, or even trying to decode what we think Shakespeare alone was after. But doing it together and hearing it aloud over and over has proven very useful for us.

So let's talk about how you all came together. What's your personal/professional history as a group?

BEN: Shall I take that, guys?

JESSIE and NOAH: Sure.

BEN: We started because of the work that we'd done together in grad school which, in the case of Noah and Jessie and me, includes directing short plays of each others'. I directed a short play of Noah's. Noah directed Jessie and me in a Harold Pinter play. Noah and I did a summer Shakespeare tour as actors together, along with many other experiences that we had together in school. So we had gotten to try on all kinds of different identities theatrically, not just as actors but as makers of theater, as teachers—Noah and I started teaching right after grad school. So we were not only interested in making theater but in talking about making theater.

Those kind of twin impulses of performing and teaching or of making the work and thinking about the work really informed our desire to start putting a lot of our ideas and questions into practice, which we did through the teaching and then through a workshop, actually, of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* back in 2007. We were working but not a lot, and we decided that we really wanted to sort of test what it would be like to do a real show with these principles leading the way, which was something that meant a lot to us but that seemed to be kind of missing from the New York conversation about classical theater and about making new work. So that was how we started.

Where does *Twelfth Night* come in, by the way?



Angelo (Paul Coffey) accosts Isabella (Emily Young) in Fiasco's *Measure for Measure*. Young also played Mistress Overdone, and Coffey played Elbow. Photo by Joan Marcus, New Victory Theater.

JESSIE: We did *Twelfth Night* in 2010. Basically, we'd done a workshop of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, we'd done some teaching. Ben did a workshop of *Twelfth Night* with some of our students in 2008 when Noah and I were both working out of town, and then we decided to do an Off Off [Broadway] production of *Twelfth Night* after *Cymbeline*. We did *Cymbeline* Off Off Broadway as our first show, then it got picked up for an Off Broadway run. Between the Off Off production at Access Theater and the Off Broadway run at Theater for a New Audience [of *Cymbeline*], we produced *Twelfth Night*, also at Access Theater. And that was with a cast of eight.

Did the success of *Cymbeline* take you by surprise?

BEN: Yes.

JESSIE: Yeah, absolutely.

NOAH: Absolutely. We did *Cymbeline* because, you know, we were having professional experiences and getting work, but not to the extent we wanted, and those experiences weren't always as interesting or as fruitful or artistically generative for us as those that we had at graduate school. We were craving that experience, so we decided to put a project together for ourselves, something we were passionate about, and we would kind of joke that it didn't matter what happened because nobody was going to come see it anyway. The producing plan was that we were hoping to get 22 people a night to come see it just to cover the cost, as we were putting every penny in. And we thought, "Well 11 performances, that's like three times more people than we know, how will we ever get that many people to come see the show?"

I think it's important because, not that we didn't want people to see it, but we weren't doing it for any other purpose other than it was the thing we wanted to do artistically and a work we believed in. We weren't trying to get agents, we weren't trying to create something that would get picked up. We were risking for ourselves in order to have an experience. I think that's the thing, the energy and generosity of spirit at the center of it, that is what so many of our audience members have enjoyed about it.

So, it came as a huge surprise to us. Even that anyone from *The Times* would review it, and the scale of response to it was thrilling and astonishing.

And as you know it sort of has defined us for a long time. We've been riding the arc of that little comet in a wonderful way. Now we're doing other things like *Into the Woods* and other shows that are expanding what I think Fiasco's identity is, but it still remains one of the most magnificent Cinderella stories. It actually happened that someone came and saw our show and said, "I'm going to put you in my season, kid." Really, really remarkable.

You had the very famous trunk in *Cymbeline*. You had the doors in *Measure for Measure*. Where do you guys come up with these sets, and is it you that comes up with the set ideas or is it a set designer that comes up with it?

[Ben and Noah respond at the same time, both say, "Go ahead" to the other, and both again trample over each other trying to answer. They laugh.]

BEN: This is turning into an Abbott and Costello thing. I'll just jump in here because I'll have to hop off in a second. We come up with those ideas. What we do is we tend to ask ourselves what are the things that we absolutely need to have to tell the story and then we try to basically give ourselves only that much stuff and let our imagination and the audience's imagination and music and physicality and creativity fill in the rest.



Emily Young, who plays Sylvia, leads the rest of the cast in tossing up a stack of letters, creating the thematic set for Fiasco's production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. "It's us and a lot of letters," says company member Jessie Austrian. Photo by Jeff Malet, Folger Theatre.

So, we don't want to clutter either the stage or the audience's access to the play. We want them to see actors doing things and keep the visual metaphors as simple as we can, and to reuse the things that we put on stage as many different ways as we can. That's why we anchor ourselves around those visual ideas, because they help us behave on stage, but they leave enough to the imagination that we're not filling in all the gaps.

But we come up with those ideas, and in the case of *Cymbeline* we worked with

our friend Jacques Roy, who built the trunk. And in the case of *Measure for Measure*, we worked with the Tony-winning set designer Derek McLane who executed and made beautiful our ideas with the doors. So it's our ideas, and the designer helps us to make those ideas turn into something that's actually a thing.

What are we going to expect for *Two Gents*?

JESSIE: Well, the other thing I was going to add to that which is a bridge to *Two Gents* is that it's very important to us that we are doing the play in the room that we are in with the audience, and that we're all in the same space, we're breathing the same air, we're hearing the music together. We're not trying to pretend that the audience is not in the same room that we are. In the beginning, that informed what we ended up doing with *Cymbeline*, because we did it in a big loft space where there was no backstage, there was no way to do a blackout. So, knowing that, we embraced the idea that we should just all be on all the time, and that's part of the rough magic that's at the center of that show, which lines up with its content.

We knew we were going to do *Measure for Measure* at the New Victory, and the space is beautiful. The doors were our way in thematically, and our designers integrated them into the existing architecture of the New Vic beautifully.

And so with *The Folger*, it's the first time that we're working in a space that has such a strong identity and such a Shakespearean identity. Thus far, the first question we tend to ask ourselves is what do we absolutely have to have and only have to tell this story. And you don't need anything for *Two Gents*. You need people. It's about relationships. It's about pairs of relationships and one's relationship to oneself and finding yourself in others. So, right now, we're not planning to have much at all, except ourselves and this beautiful Shakespearean theater that looks a lot like where this play may have first been performed. And perhaps a lot of letters, because letters are pretty big in the plot, and the written word and putting love into language is at the center of the play. So we may expand on that and use paper in various ways. But right now, it's us and a lot of letters.

NOAH: What was important about the trunk and the doors is they are both engendered by the text. They are contained within the plot of the play, they actually come from the thematic content, they all resonate in themselves, but they also allow the behavior to happen on stage between human beings. So, they aren't visual metaphors imposed upon a set that the actors can't interact with in ways other than human beings interacting with those actual things, like a trunk or like a door. Now, we may use them in other ways that are representative, but we're still behaving with them as human beings. So, it's important to us that the object that adds to the physical life of the play is a thing that people use and behave with as human beings as opposed to a giant metaphor descending from the heavens and just sort of sits there visually but otherwise it doesn't make a difference to the acting.

Now, of course, *Two Gents* famously has a dog. So, is it going to be a seventh member of the cast or somebody playing Crab?

BEN: I'll just tell you that we don't know, we don't know yet.

NOAH: Somebody brought this up and I still think it's a good idea that it just gets played by an actual crab.

JESSIE: I feel like the D.C.-area audience would appreciate that: crabmeat, Maryland.

That's true.

BEN: I'm going to sign off now. It was great talking with you.

Good talking with you, Ben. Thank you very, very much for your time. I appreciate it.

BEN: All right, I look forward to seeing you in Washington. Bye-Bye.

Are there other plays you guys are thinking about that really are appealing to you right now?

NOAH: There certainly are other Shakespeare plays that are appealing to us. We're asking ourselves what other authors, what other kinds of theater. I don't know if we should be floating titles—I'm looking at Jessie right now.

JESSIE: I don't know. Eventually we'd like to do all the Shakespeare plays, I think.

That would be cool.

JESSIE: But for now, I think continuing to use the criteria of ensemble pieces that work with a single generation. We are a single-generation company. But we're starting to look to see what else is possible and when we want to expand those criteria. It was really thrilling with *Into the Woods*; we got to expand our family from six to 11. So, we may look at some of the bigger, the history plays, which would require more actors and give us a different kind of challenge.

In addition to other authors and other kinds of theater, we've just begun experimenting with the idea of what it might mean to create our own work from scratch as an ensemble.

Perhaps, and maybe I'm leaping here, but perhaps in a way that Shakespeare actually did it, since he had an ensemble that he worked with.

[Long pause]
JESSIE: Yeah.

NOAH: Maybe.
[Laughter]

I look forward to the day you guys do the *Henry VI* trilogy with *Richard III*, intact.

JESSIE: Ahhh.

NOAH: Ah-ah! Yeah, well, that whole War of the Roses is of great interest to me.

Yeah, so you know where I'm at.

NOAH: Yeah.

You mentioned expanding to 11. Do you sometimes feel that people look at what you do with just six actors as kind of a gimmick? "That's gimmick Shakespeare, I like pure Shakespeare, that's a gimmick." Do you run into that very much?

NOAH: Yeah, we do to a certain degree, and that's understandable. But sometimes people mistake our productions or an aesthetic that simply gets placed atop any play that we do. We don't necessarily go into play and say, "OK, how can we do this with six people?" We really do try to ask ourselves, "What is this play about, what's at its heart, what would be the best way to do this play?" And we really do try to start from first principles. We do have a company of six so we do think about that. Certainly in the case of *Measure for Measure*, we spent a lot of time just sitting with that play, having not cast it at all and just thinking about the play, talking about the themes, talking about the text, and trying to come up with a way that we think would be the best way to do it. It's why we did *Into the Woods* with 10 actors and a pianist because we realized that was going to be the best way to do that.

People sometimes say, “Well you guys should do this play and Fiascoize it,” as though it were an elixir of 11 spices or something sprinkled on top of any piece of text. So, yeah, we do encounter that and, as I say, to a certain degree it’s understandable. My hope would be that as we continue to broaden the way we work and the number of people we work with, the kinds of text that we work on, that narrative will then diminish.

And I have to say when I went into *Measure for Measure*, I was thinking that, “Oh this is going to be a Fiasco production.”

NOAH: And that’s not a bad thing. That’s not a bad thing because we certainly do love it that people identify our work and the way we work as being different from the way other people do it. I think that’s a very positive thing. It’s only when people don’t seem to understand that what that thing is starts with text from the beginning and asks the primary questions as opposed to, “So, where can we stick the songs?”

And that’s how I came out of it. I’m watching it and going, “This is *Measure for Measure*.” I mean, it’s just great. I wish the Provost was at the end, but I understand.

[Noah laughs.]

JESSIE: Yeah, I know [Laughs].

NOAH: There are definitely sacrifices that we make, and they are painful for us as well.

I’ve covered everything on my must list. Is there anything you guys would like to talk about coming down to D.C.?

NOAH: We’re thrilled to get work down in D.C., a city that has a rich tradition of doing classical theater, especially Shakespeare. So, we hope that people will enjoy the work, and we’re certainly thrilled to get to work at The Folger with the people there. So far, it’s been a fantastic relationship. It’s great for us to be working with new partners and new places.

JESSIE: I’m excited about the cherry blossoms, I hear they are as great as everyone says they are.

Well, it’s snowing today.

JESSIE: The only hope for us is that cold weather means that the cherry blossoms come out a little bit later because we’re not down there until mid-April.

[Jessie got her wish, arriving in Washington as the cherry trees were peaking; and then we got hit with another winter-mix storm.]

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