

Artist Spotlight: Brad Oxnam

Watershed Public Theatre first met Brad Oxnam when he took on the role of Charles Dickens in *A Victorian Christmas Carol*, WPT's first production, and we're not letting go of him. In addition to reprising the Dickens



role in subsequent years, Brad performed in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *School House Rock Live!*, and was cast in *Romeo and Juliet*. He has also taken over leadership of the Journeyman Troupe and taught workshops in the "Fundamentals of Acting," "Shakespeare's Essentials," and "Acting with Voice and Body."

He directed WPT's *Charlotte's*

Web and *James and the Giant Peach* and will direct the upcoming *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. All of this while he holds down a day job, enjoys home life with his wife (Oriia) and most excellent dog (Emmy Jo Oxnam, the Beagle Harrier), performs in the Nashville theatre scene and does professional voice over work. Oh, and did we mention he designs fight choreography and is expert at dialects? He can also juggle, whistle and turn his leg backwards.

Kate Foreman, the founder and executive director of Watershed, has long viewed Oxnam as an significant player in the ongoing success of WPT. "Brad has been an integral part of WPT from the beginning, when he auditioned for our very first production. His talent earned him a lead role in that show, and since then he has been involved on some level with most of WPT's productions. Brad reflects our mission in his work, embracing collaboration and supporting his fellow artists. When he's not delighting audiences onstage, chances are he's directing a play, teaching or mentoring other theatre artists. The artistic support Brad has contributed has been a key component of WPT's success thus far. I for one am very grateful that he decided to audition for us five years ago."

Brad is obviously a go-to guy when WPT needs an

actor, a director, a teacher and a resource for all manner of theatrical knowledge. He comes by these skills through natural inclination, innate talent and hard work. Oxnam received his MFA in Theatre Performance from the University of Southern Mississippi and has subsequently taught theatre and acting classes at Motlow State Community College and Middle Tennessee State University. But it was years before this formal education that he first caught the acting bug. He was in kindergarten when he was cast (perhaps prophetically) as William Shakespeare and had the line, "I am William Shakespeare. To be or not to be!" He recalls that his next acting experience was in high school: "I auditioned and was cast in a community theatre production of *Cheaper by the Dozen*. I played Larry, the boyfriend, and at the time, that was quite a stretch for me." The defining moment when he understood his future would be in acting was during a college production of *Crazy for You*. "Something went wrong," Oxnam remembered, "and my onstage partner and I had to improvise a mirror routine and go into a song. The scene went so well, we got a standing ovation just for that!"

In developing his craft, Oxnam has been influenced by some of the great talents of our time: Robin Williams, Gilda Radner, Bill Irwin, and Gary Oldman. Those who have seen in him play roles such as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can attest to a natural ease and almost improvisational quality to his performance style that can definitely be seen in his role models. Just as with classic Robin Williams sketches and Gilda Radner's SNL skits, there's a sense with Oxnam that he is creating the scene at that moment, fresh, in response to what is happening around him. The audience never feels that his scenes are rehearsed; instead, they come to life in that moment for their enjoyment. Oxnam credits much of his strength to his mentors, saying "Scot J. Mann, Monica Hayes, and Louis Rackoff (all faculty members during my graduate school years at

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the University of Southern Mississippi) were the most instrumental in my growth as an actor.”

With such a varied and extensive portfolio, it’s understandable that Oxnam finds it challenging to pinpoint what he’s most proud of amongst his theatrical work. After reflection, he shares he can’t narrow it down to one incident or production. “There have been several productions of which I’ve been proud to be a part, onstage or off. My graduate thesis production of *Scapin* comes to mind, but that would neglect productions here in Nashville of *Othello*, *Amadeus*, *James & the Giant Peach*, the *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *Molly Sweeney*.”

He attributes much of who he has become in personal as well as professional life to his involvement in theatre. “I honestly don’t think I would be who I am today without becoming involved in theatre. Before, I was very shy and had trouble expressing myself. Afterwards, I became more open, more creative, and generally, a happier person.” Understandably, his plans for the future involve “more of the same.” Citing his love of challenges, Oxnam is looking forward to directing WPT’s production of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)*. He has also been finding success in the world of voice acting and intends to pursue that discipline as well as, always, opportunities for onstage performances, his first love.



Brad as Bottom surrounded by fairies in WPT’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 2018. Also pictured (l to r) Nessa Survant, Sierra Allison, Haley Tilley and TiAnna Cotton.

Specialty License Plates

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\$5 Special for Teachers and Healthcare Workers

While WPT is celebrating our return to live performance, we want to take a moment to recognize some of the people who are continuing to work the front line during these challenging times: healthcare workers and teachers.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) is an energetic comedy full of laughs. To acknowledge educators and healthcare professionals, we are offering them special \$5 tickets for this production.

As WPT Executive Director Kate Foreman noted, “We are grateful for the dedication to the community shown by those nurses, doctors, teachers and support staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic. Our small token of thanks is to entertain and uplift them with lighthearted fun. We believe they would benefit from a good laugh right now, and we’ve got plenty to share with them.”

To claim the \$5 tickets, healthcare providers and teachers can email education@watershedtheatre.org to reserve tickets for their preferred performance. For performance dates, directions and other details, visit WatershedPublicTheatre.org.

Maury Voices Chosen for 2022 Film Festival

Beginning in 2019, Watershed Public Theatre began developing a series of short plays inspired by significant people and events in Maury County history. The project has continued to develop thanks to funding support from the Tennessee Arts Commission and the Maury County Historical Society.

In March 2021, WPT filmed the first four pieces created for the historic play series. The four pieces were combined into one film that was presented as a virtual production titled *Maury Voices: Stories from Our Community's Past*. The production featured local actors performing the plays on location at the Polk Home, Rippavilla and the Athenaeum, with videography and editing provided by Visual Media Company of Columbia.

All four pieces featured in the production were written by frequent WPT contributor Beverly Mitchell. "An Evening with Sarah Childress Polk," performed by Sherry Johnson, gives viewers insight into the life of the former First Lady. "Learning to Live Free" examines the Freedmen School and post-Civil War life from the perspective of a former enslaved person, played by Quantagus McFall. The story of two women named Jennie Cheairs who both resided at Rippavilla is portrayed by Megan Roberts and Detra Walker. The final piece, "A Schoolgirl's Diary: The Columbia Athenaeum," is performed by Cameron Schulz.

Encouraged by the positive audience response to *Maury Voices*, WPT stepped outside our "theatre" comfort zone and submitted it to two film festivals. On January 3, 2022, the Ogeechee International Film Festival announced that *Maury Voices: Stories from Our Community's Past* would be one of only 14 entries chosen to be screened at the 2022 Festival.

According to Ogeechee Film Festival Coordinator Lauren Della Piazza Hartke, "COVID-19 restrictions significantly limited the scale of our festival this year, which made competition particularly steep. We were only able to accept the very best." *Maury Voices* was one of six films chosen from the USA, and the remaining submissions selected represent the

Netherlands, Brazil, France, Italy, Israel, Spain and Greece.

The first four Film Festivals were hosted at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia, but due to the pandemic, they moved to a virtual format in 2021. The 6th Annual Ogeechee International History Film Festival will be presented online beginning February 24, 2022.

There is no admission fee to view the 14 films presented this year. *Maury Voices* will be available for screening until March 6 at 6:00 pm.

For more details about the festival, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/OIHFF. To stay up to date on festival news, follow the Film Festival on Facebook: [Facebook.com/OgeecheeFilmFestival](https://www.facebook.com/OgeecheeFilmFestival).



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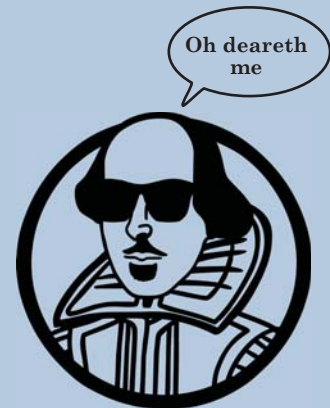
presents

The Complete Works ^{OF} William Shakespeare **[ABRIDGED]**

by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, Jess Winfield

February 25-26, March 4-5, 2022 7:00 pm
February 27 & March 6, 2022 3:00 pm

Ledbetter Auditorium (Clement Building)
Columbia State Community College



General Admission \$20
Seniors \$18
Students/children \$10

For tickets and details visit WatershedPublicTheatre.org

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