

## As You Like It

### Director's notes on the Parish Players revision

We are using as the basis for our script Alan Brissenden's 1993 edition for *The Oxford Shakespeare*, but it might have been based on any number of others, since there are only minimal differences in the various versions. *As You Like It* is one of the eighteen plays that appeared in print for the first time in the "First Folio" of 1623, and it is believed that the printers had a relatively complete and clean manuscript of *AYLI* to work with. In our discussions, "Folio" refers— somewhat inexactly, perhaps— to the Brissenden *Oxford* edition.

The revision has three aims. The first is to shorten the play, so that running time comes to about two hours; to do this, roughly 15% of the text has been eliminated. In some cases, the elimination of sections of text has led to re-ordering some lines as part of the stitching-together process; examples include the "tame snake" passage from 4.3, salvaged from an otherwise deleted section, and moved to be part of an earlier scene (3.5). Many of the deleted lines are scattered in two's and three's throughout the play, but these especially brutal amputations are worth noting:

1. most of the First Lord's story of Jaques and the wounded deer (2.1)
2. the conversation with Corin concerning the purchase of a cottage (2.4)
3. part of Phoebe's scene with Silvius and scheme for a letter to Rosalind (3.5)
4. the scene between Rosalind and Silvius, reading Phoebe's letter (4.3)
5. various omissions in the final act: shortening lines by Touchstone, Jaques, Duke Senior; the elimination of the characters, Martext and Hymen, and of the song, "Juno's Crown" (5.4)

The second aim is to replace archaic language when the original text, to present-day ears, is ambiguous, jarring, or misleading. When Shakespeare writes of "the *humorous* duke," he means not a jovial or funny guy, but rather something closer to, "the *ill-humored* duke"; numerous replacements of this type are made. We have tried to err on the side of restraint—these changes do not represent an effort to "modernize" the text, but only to eliminate unnecessary impediments to the audience's enjoyment of the play.

The final aim is to accommodate our staging: adaptations to cope with limited space both on-stage and backstage; and for the particular manner in which Arden Forest is portrayed in the production. These changes include the timing of some entrances and exits; where players go when they exit; the numbers and identity of extras; and other changes relating to the fact that we will use, in essence, just two sets: Oliver's office, and Arden Forest.

In a few instances, we have made changes not because of any of these three revision principles, but merely as an arrogantly presumption to improve clarity or dramatic flow, for example: adding the adjectives in, "*new* duke," and, "*old* duke," when it might not be altogether apparent *which* duke is meant; and the (still very tentative) "bid me welcome" at the end of the Epilogue.

The revision creates new scene divisions, mainly in order to create a single intermission at a logical moment roughly the halfway through the play. Act One, in our version, runs through Folio Act III, scene 1, which is also the last scene to take place in Frederick's court. Our Act Two, then, begins with Folio Act III, scene 2, and takes place entirely within Arden Forest. The original Act and scene numbers are included in the brief description at the head of each scene, noted as "Folio."

The script changes were made by me, in consultation with Michael Manheim, of Strafford, formerly of the University of Toledo, and a longtime Shakespeare scholar. Mike has suggested many of the most useful and elegant substitutions, and saved me from a number of unwise changes. But as his good advice was not always accepted, the blame for any truly bonehead alterations is entirely mine.