



Beyond the Gate

John Andrews '65 Study of Shakespeare provides life's work

By Sam J. Cooper
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It's surprising that John Andrews '65, who has edited editions of Shakespeare's plays and several scholarly journals, wasn't always a Bardophile. Andrews first aspired to be a painter and when applying to colleges only considered universities with architecture programs.

Andrews came to Princeton from Carlsbad, N.M., a town on the southern side of the state most famous for its caves — "suitable for Caliban," he said. Andrews was initially fascinated by elements of architectural design but discovered that he didn't have much of a penchant for the engineering involved.

He moved from construction theory to language construction when he took a seminar on Renaissance literature with Sherman Hawkins, an award-winning professor in the English department. Andrews then realized his passion for language — how metaphors and symbols work together to build a seamless, intellectually rich drama.

At Princeton, Andrews quickly signed on as an English major, continuing his study of Shakespeare as a graduate student at Harvard and Vanderbilt universities. He taught Shakespeare to high school and college students and spent a decade directing the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. He also edited the Everyman Shakespeare series.

In 1987, Andrews founded the Shakespeare Guild, a non-profit organization in the nation's capital devoted to promoting appreciation of "the world's most influential writer." The Guild annually presents the "Golden Quill" award to individuals who have demonstrated excellence in the dramatic arts. Recipients, celebrated at a gala event, have included Derek Jacobi, Ian McKellan, Judi Dench and Kenneth Branagh.

Throughout his career, Andrews has tried to popularize Shakespeare

texts, Andrews hopes to change readers' perceptions of Shakespeare. Instead of viewing Shakespeare as something read only by crusty intellectuals in dusty libraries, he hopes to get readers thinking more about the performance aspect of the plays.

Reading between the letters

"We need to learn to hear with our eyes when we read Shakespeare," he said, "and to sound out the words and be conscious that a given line or phrase can often have self-contradictory meaning."

Alternate pronunciations of words can lead readers to a new reading of a character. Andrews pointed out that in the original copies of Shakespeare's "Macbeth," the word "human" was spelled with an "o" at the end and in performance pronounced "humane."

"The Shakespearean spelling carries more implication than the modernized version of it does," he said. Through his work, Andrews strives to prod readers to accept these types of alternative readings of the language.

"I think I really fell most in love with Shakespeare when I was editing the plays. Every day I was working with these texts and trying to best convey what they contained to a modern audience with annotations and introductions," he said. "I discovered that Shakespeare was wonderful company. I never got bored. I always found myself learning things. Emerson compared Shakespeare to other great writers and he summed it up by saying, 'Shakespeare was inconceivably wise, the others conceivably.'"

Continuing studies

It wasn't until graduate school that Andrews took a course exclusively on the deeply faceted language of the Bard. His English requirements at Princeton were "more general" and many of his advisers were scholars of American literature. While at Vanderbilt, Andrews found his niche when Leeds Barroll, an editor of the journal "Shakespeare Studies," took Andrews on as an assistant editor

international productions.

"In any of those editions, you'd get a sense of what was happening in Shakespeare all over. Shakespeare behind the iron curtain."

Though he has never performed in any of the plays, he hopes one day to direct a production of "The Tempest."

Until the opportunity arises, though, Andrews is living in

Washington, D.C., with his wife Janet and is working on a book about a conspiracy theory — the role of Shakespeare in the Lincoln assassination.

What keeps Andrews reading and writing, even though he has read many of the plays countless times, is the depth and possibility in the language.

"You can imagine how one could be a Marlowe or a Bacon. But you could not imagine how you could be Shakespeare," he said, responding to those who doubt Shakespeare's authorship of the plays.

"Woody Allen summed it up rather nicely: Let's postulate that Marlowe was the author. Then ... who wrote Marlowe?"



PHOTO BY SIMON LEIBOWITZ, COURTESY OF JOHN ANDREWS '65

Actress Judi Dench (l. to r.), Shakespeare Guild founder John Andrews '65, actor Kenneth Branagh and actor Derek Jacobi at the 2000 Golden Quill Awards, an annual event held by the guild.

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even more by making the complexity of the dramatist's language more accessible. Andrews' philosophy about reading the plays and seeing them performed comes through in his vision for the Everyman Shakespeare series.

Going to 'hear' a play

"We tend to forget that for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the plays were originally meant to be spoken and heard," Andrews said. "In Shakespeare's time, [audiences] thought of themselves as going to 'hear' a play rather than audiences today say they are going to 'see' a play."

There is little room for change in terms of what readers commonly accept as Shakespeare's text, but by commissioning actors such as Kevin Kline, Patrick Stewart, James Earl Jones, F. Murray Abraham and John Gielgud to write prefaces to the

and pulled him away from the Victorian period.

"I was really interested in the kind of research and criticism that was being done in the field of Shakespeare studies," he said.

The experience prompted Andrews to undertake his own editorship at another journal, Shakespeare Quarterly, when he assumed the directorship of academic programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library from 1974 to 1984. During his time at the Folger, Andrews raised more than \$4 million and organized a large-scale exhibit, "Shakespeare: The Globe and the World," which toured the country.

While shaping the coverage at the Quarterly, Andrews again wanted to focus on Shakespeare in performance, commissioning articles on how actors perform Shakespeare as well as reviews of

M. Taylor Pyne Honor Prize. A prize awarded annually to the senior who has

manifested in outstanding fashion the following qualifications: excellence in

scholarship, character, and effective support of the best interests of Princeton

University. Founded in 1921 in remembrance of the life and character of M.

Taylor Pyne, Class of 1877, Trustee of Princeton 1885-1921, by his cousin, Mrs.

May Taylor Moulton Hanrahan, the prize is the highest general distinction the

University confers upon an undergraduate. The prize consists of the income from

this fund up to the prevailing comprehensive fee for one academic year.

The prize winner will be selected by the President of the University, the Deans of the

College and of Undergraduate Students, and the Secretary of the University. We are

eager to receive nominations from members of the University community. Please direct

such names and, preferably, letters of nomination to Dean Kathleen Deignan at 313 West

College, by Friday, January 9, 2004.