

A Canonical Accomplishment

Scott Kaiser and Richard L. Hay, both longtime OSF artists, have worked on each of Shakespeare's plays at least once.

It's no secret that here at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival people are keen to see or work on all of Shakespeare's plays—and to count them. Checking off all 37 (38 if you include *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) of Shakespeare's plays is called canon-clicking. The goal is not easy to accomplish, because productions of some of the obscure plays can be separated by 20 years.



"It's definitely a milestone, and was almost 40 years in the making."

—Scott Kaiser

Scott Kaiser, director of company development, first set his sights on completing Shakespeare's canon at the age of 15 after playing Bottom in his high school's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This year, *The Taming of the Shrew* completes his OSF canon.

Reflecting on his accomplishment, Scott said, "It's definitely a milestone, and was almost 40 years in the making. Not everyone is able to work on every Shakespeare play—and at one organization. How many theatres do *Henry VIII*?"

Scott has worked on 47 Shakespearean productions at OSF in 11 different capacities, including actor, fight choreographer, voice and text director, associate director, co-director, co-adapter and adapter. Wearing those different hats provided Scott the opportunity to focus on different aspects of the plays and expand various skill sets. It helps explain why he is now in his current position of director of company development, where he nurtures the artistic development of actors at OSF as well as scouts and recruits young acting talent nationwide.

He had completed his personal canon (which includes shows done elsewhere) after being voice and text director on OSF's 2009 production of *Henry VIII*, but with *The Taming of the Shrew* he has worked on all of Shakespeare's plays here at OSF. Always with an eye toward completing the canon, he chose to be involved with the lesser-done plays.

The accidental canon-clicker

Richard Hay, senior scenic and theatre designer, was far less goal-oriented. When he first designed sets for OSF in 1953 (*Coriolanus*; *Henry VI, Part One*; *The Merchant of Venice*; *The Taming of the Shrew*), he says he never thought about completing the canon. He did so the first time in 1978 with *Timon of Athens*; in 2014 he will complete it a second time with *Richard III*.

"When I realized all I needed was *Richard III*, I began to take notice," he said.

Since 1953, Richard has designed 125 Shakespeare productions at OSF. "They are rich and complex plays," he said. "Shakespeare can provide limitless approaches. You can tackle the same old play and it's always a new adventure."

While Scott and Richard have looked at all those Shakespeare plays from very different perspectives, their overriding goal for the productions is the same: Tell the story.

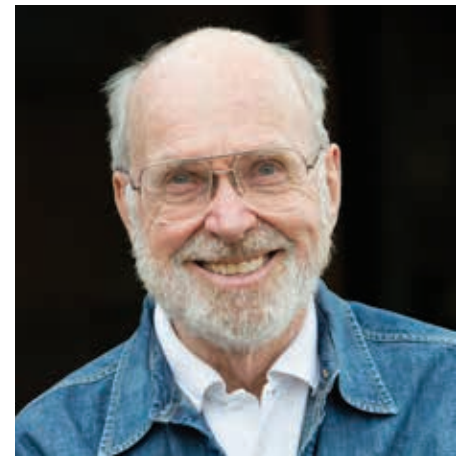
"As a voice and text director, I help the actor grapple with the language to illuminate the story," Scott said.

Richard creates a space for the actor to tell that story. "One thing I want to do is make the actor look good," he said, "and

that has to do with scale and relationship of things around him—and creating the space for movement. It's a logistical puzzle and I like solving the big puzzle."

Both Scott and Richard have seen many solutions to textual and logistical challenges and can offer invaluable insights to directors and the creative teams. In 1963, Richard solved a critical problem for *Romeo and Juliet* in getting Juliet's sarcophagus downstage, where it could be seen by everyone. This "slip stage" used to convey the tomb downstage has been used ever since on the outdoor Elizabethan Stage.

Now that Scott has completed his long-sought-after goal and Richard has designed all the plays in the Shakespearean canon twice, what's next?



"When I realized all I needed was Richard III, I began to take notice."

—Richard L. Hay

Scott is immersed in teaching and writing projects using his knowledge about Shakespeare's body of work.

Richard is ready to take on more Shakespeare and feels it's time to revisit *Hamlet*. He's designed it five times at OSF—1954, 1961, 1974, 1983 and 2000—but it feels like a long time and maybe he'll get the chance this decade.

—Amy E. Richard