

Arden, Delaware – June 4, 2011

In Arden, Delaware, home of the Arden Shakespeare Guild, Shakespeare is part of the fabric of our community. It's become a family legacy to be passed down from generation to generation. Here are some examples of how Arden and Shakespeare and Family have all interrelated over the years.

Brooke Bovard starred as Helena in the 1994 Arden production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," along with Rebecca Fisher as Hermia. Brooke's son, Drumlin Brooke, was only 5 and also had a part. He was part of a troupe of 15 (!) fairies: 8 for Titania, 7 for Oberon. The "Mechanicals" were played by the elder statesmen of Arden theater: a troupe of troupers that included Edmund Hurlong, Don Holcomb, and Betty Solway Smith. The three performances marked a revival of Shakespeare in Arden after a 13-year absence, and led to the formation of the Arden Shakespeare Guild two years later.

Fast forward to 2011. This year's "Tempest" completes our 18th summer and 19th Shakespeare production. Brooke, having played Olivia in Twelfth Night (1996), Feste in our 2005 1920's version of the same play, among other roles, is playing the Goddess Iris. But who is that young actress in the role of Miranda – the one with a cascade of red hair to match Brooke's own? It's Brooke's daughter, Tegan Harcourt, 15. And, invisible in her magic garb as a "Shape" is Julia Davidson, 12, Rebecca Fisher's daughter. We've come full circle, with a new generation of Shakespeare player's now firmly established center stage.

In 1999 the Shakespeare Guild held a reading by the fireside at Guild Hall. Ron Ozer recalls being asked to read there, his first experience reading Shakespeare aloud. For his monologue he chose one by Romeo, not considering he was a bit old for the part. The experience of performing this intense scene began a long association with Arden Shakespeare Guild for himself and his daughters. The following year his girls Lily and Emily appeared in the Young Actor's Workshop, an annual event each January which has kids as young as 5 begin their Shakespeare acting life. Ron has appeared in at least 7 productions since and his daughters have been in 3 each as well. This started a decade of frequent community theater and school productions for the 3 family actors. Dorinda Dove, mother and spouse in this Arden family and co-owner of The Birth Center in Wilmington has remained on the sidelines, attending all of the many productions her Arden family is now cast in. While not acting in this year's exciting production of the Tempest, Ron is helping publicize this year's show for the Arden Club as usual. Their daughters remain busy in performance, one majoring in theater for College and one in the Delaware All State Theater production of Ragtime the Musical opening June 17 at the DuPont Theatre.

Further ties to our seminal "Midsummer Night's Dream" production:
Allan Kleban played Demetrius. He is Adrian, a lord, in this year's "Tempest" and has remained one of our most steadfast utility players over the years, having played Solanio (or Salerio) in "Merchant of Venice," Rosenkrantz (or Guildenstern) in "Hamlet" and a variety of captains, lords, villains over the years. (He was captured by Blue the Watchdog in "Much Ado.")

Faith Whittington worked lights for the 1994 "Midsummer Night's Dream," which included a rapid evacuation to Gild Hall when a violent thunderstorm swept in. Faith actually made the call to move – and move fast – when, from her perch alongside the follow spot, she sighted the black and roiling wall of thunder heads (more suited to "Lear") bearing down from the west. We had never rehearsed in the hall, had no set on the stage, no lighting plan. Moving to the hall had always been our plan in the event of foul weather, but the plan was only in our heads, and we never expected the weather to turn that foul that quickly. Twenty minutes later, a soaked-to-the-skin cast AND audience were in place at the Gild Hall, and Faith brought up the stage lights and proceeded to improvise a light plot. This year, as part of a cast who is well-rehearsed in BOTH venues, Faith plays the Goddess Ceres.

As you can see Arden Shakespeare Gild's 18 year history is filled with long-lived well-loved relationships to the community, family and to the Bard of Avon. Shakespeare has always been an important part of Arden since its founding 110 years ago. Tradition continues in the woods of Arden