InsideOUT

PRODUCED BY THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT OF THE DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

JANUARY 2006

Illustration by Scott McKowen

Measure FOR Measure

Directed by Kent Thompson
Jan 26 - Feb 25
Stage Theatre

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A division of The Denver Center for the Performing Arts

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Synopsis

Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure
—Measure for Measure

Because he has been lax in administering the law, Duke Vincentio of Vienna now wants a first-hand view of the workings of justice in his city. He assigns the governing power of the city to his deputy, Angelo, a man who is scrupulous in administering the law. Angelo's first official act is to decree death for Claudio, guilty of sleeping with his fiancée, Juliet. When this act is followed by a proclamation to raze all the brothels in the city, the prosperous world of bawds, pimps and whores, represented by Mistress Overdone and Masters Pompey and Froth, is threatened with ruin. But a more serious threat faces Isabella the novice, who also is Claudio's sister, when she pleads with Angelo to save her brother's life. Angelo's adamant moral stand crumbles as he becomes smitten with Isabella; he offers her brother's life in exchange for a night of sexual pleasure with her. Aghast at such a choice, Isabella refuses and tells Claudio he must die for her chastity. Claudio cravenly argues that his death might be a more fearful thing than her dishonor. The plot turns on the secret manipulations of Friar Lodowick (the Duke in disguise) to bring about some resolutions to problems that are never really solved.

Measure for Measure *is a complex mixture of high principles and questionable actions, exploring sexuality and the abuse of authority by those in power in a corrupt Vienna of dank prisons and seething brothels. The play faces squarely the problems encountered when the state tries to regulate the sexual and emotional lives of individual citizens.*
—Royal Shakespeare Co. advertisement for 1987 production of *Measure for Measure*

Sources of *The Play*

The main plot of *Measure for Measure* is derived from a story widely popular in Western Europe during the 16th century. The earliest version of the story was written by Giovanni Baptista Giraldi Cinthio in Italy in 1565. In a collection of 100 stories called The Hecatommithi, he wrote of the beautiful, intelligent Epitia, who pleads for her brother Vico's life when he is accused of rape. She implores the magistrate, the callous and repellent Juriste. He dangles the prospect of marriage before her, but does not intend to fulfill it. Some time before 1573, Cinthio turned his story into a five-act play called *Epitia*.

In 1578 Cinthio's novella was borrowed by George Whetstone as the basis of his two-part play, *Promos and Cassandra*. The plot is similar to the short story but was overshadowed by an elaborate subplot of low life trickery and deception. However, there does emerge from the drama a sympathy for those oppressed by corrupt officials and extremely harsh laws.

There are other literary, historical and political influences in this play that give it numerous layers and nuances. These include everything from religious references to observations of 16th-century political and social behaviors, from archtypal individual characters to stock situations and predicaments that endured from *commedia dell'arte* story and performance.

Shakespeare, William. *Measure for Measure*.
NY: Oxford University Press, 1994. Bawcutt, N.W. "Introduction"

A Problem Play

I do now let loose my opinion, hold it no longer. —Trinculo, *The Tempest*

Written between the festive comedies and the late romances, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well* pose unique problems. In the introduction to *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's Measure for Measure*, Richard P. Wheeler summarizes various critics' opinions as to why this comedy is classified as a problem play.

E. K. Chambers in his book, S*hakespeare: a Survey* (1925) believes that Shakespeare had "a shifting outlook upon humanity" while writing these plays.[1] He writes that these are unpleasant plays, full of questions and skepticisms as if the writer were going through a period when his outlook darkened. Perhaps Shakespeare was becoming disillusioned with the art of comedy. In 1896 F.S. Boas (*Shakespeare and his Predecessors*) postulated that these plays anticipate the modern problem plays of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw, who "used drama to identify, isolate and explore disquieting social problems." [2] Other scholars feel that the problem lay with the failure of the ending to effectively address the issues and conflicts that the play has dramatized. Harriet Hawkins (*The Devil's Party: Critical Counter-Interpretation of Shakespearean Drama*) observes, "the kinds of solutions offered by the Duke—whether Shakespeare intended them to or not—seem hopelessly inadequate in the face of the psychological, sexual and moral conflicts they are supposed to have resolved."[3]

The play, however, has become more popular in the 20th century. This production is set in Vienna at the turn of the century, where Sigmund Freud was writing *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The play seems pertinent to the themes of sexuality, power, corruption, repression, betrayal, lies, secrets and exposures that are expressions of the 20th-21st centuries. Graham Bradshaw (*Shakespeare's Skepticism*) says we should see the play "as an ironic exposé of the Duke—who has his own special mix of ineptitude, cowardliness, vanity and moral laziness."[4] He is responsible for the mess in Vienna, and by trying to fix it, he just muddles it even more.

Whatever one thinks of the play, it leaves us pondering and discussing the moral issues that remain ambiguous to the end—and, maybe, that's not such a bad idea after all.

Wheeler, Richard B., ed. Critical Essays on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. NY: G.K. Hall and Co., 1999.

1. Wheeler, p. 5.
2. Wheeler, p. 5.
3. Wheeler, p. 6.
4. Wheeler, p. 13.

Theme of *Measure for Measure*

The primary theme that runs through the play recalls a verse from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, 7: 1-5): "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Closely allied with these words is the command: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In Shakespeare's day the questions regarding justice versus mercy, their essential polarity and how each was to be measured were sociological, cultural and religious. Rules for behavior were specific, though not always followed, and many debates and writings can be found which try to clarify these issues in Elizabethan society. An example of this theme can be found in Isabella's words to Angelo when she learns of his plans for her brother.

In Shakespeare's day the questions regarding justice versus mercy, their essential polarity and how each was to be measured were sociological, cultural and religious.

How would you be
If He, which is at the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are? O think on that;
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made. (II-ii-75-79)

Go to your bosom
Knock there and ask your heart
what it doth know
That's like my brother's fault. If it confess
A natural guiltiness such as his,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against my brother's life. (II-ii-136-41)

In Act V, when Angelo is condemned to death by the Duke for lusting after Isabella, it is she who pleads for mercy.

My brother had but justice
In that he did the thing for which he died;
For Angelo,
His act did not o'ertake his bad intent
And must be buried but as an intent
That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are
no subjects;
Intents but merely thoughts. (V-i-446-5)

However, there are contradictions to this theme of mercy and forgiveness. Angelo is forgiven because he was a man tempted by a woman. But when the Duke questions Juliet in Act II, the double standard is evident in his words.

DUKE: *I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience,*
And try your penitence, if it be sound
Or hollowly put on—
Love you the man that wronged you?
JULIET: *Yes, as I love the woman that wrong'd him.*
DUKE: *So then, it seems, your most offenceful act*
Was mutually committed.
JULIET: *Mutually.*
DUKE: *Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.* (II-iii-21-8)

So the Duke, in his disguise as a friar, seems as merciless as Angelo.

In Shakespeare's time the rule of law and Christian doctrine were considered fundamental to human survival. But these words from St. Matthew were not always heeded.

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Ye have heard that is hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth…. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love they neighbor, and hate thine enemy…. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.
(St. Matthew 5: 38-44).

The Duke believes in the "eye for an eye" section. This is shown in his speech in Act V when he decrees:

… An Angelo for Claudio, death for death!
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure. (V-i-402-404).

But it is Isabella who follows the "love thy enemies" creed. Though she should despise Angelo for (supposedly) executing her brother and propositioning her, she turns the other cheek when Angelo is condemned by the Duke.

Most bounteous sir,
Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd
As if my brother liv'd. I partly think
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds
Till he did look on me; since it is so,
Let him not die. (V-i-431-36).

At the end of Act V the Duke dispenses justice to all. Some of his judgments are merciful, but some are certainly questionable.

If the great gods be just, they shall assist
The deeds of justest men.
Pompey. *Antony and Cleopatra*, II-i -1.

Hawkins, Harriett. *Measure for Measure: Twayne's New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare.* Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

Shakespeare, William. *Measure for Measure*. NY: Penguin Group, 1988.
Knight, G. Wilson. "*Measure for Measure* and the Gospels."

The View of Women in Shakespeare's Time & Turn-of-the-Century Vienna

Women, being the weaker vessels,
are ever thrust to the wall.
—Romeo and Juliet

In Renaissance England women were considered the weaker sex. "Popular sentiment held that [they] were deceivers and seducers in the tradition of their mother, Eve."[1] To control temptations of the flesh, one had to control women. Thus, the institution of marriage was seen by the religious as a path to restraining the desires of the body and part of the road to righteousness.

In *Measure for Measure,* the women are defined in terms of their marital or sexual status. When the Duke confronts Marianna in Act V, his questions reflect that position. He asks if she is married, a maid or a widow. A maid is a virgin and potential marriage material; wife and widow signify a wedded relationship. But since so many of the women in the play reject, resist or sidestep the maid, wife or widow roles, there is a sense of sexual promiscuity over the characters, both male and female.

The policing of women's sexuality was important in terms of reproduction. As long as women are chaste before and during marriage, their children will be a benefit to society and as heirs to their fathers' estates. But if women are promiscuous, they may "produce bastard children who become a burden on the state."[2] These children will have to rely on the provisions of charity and possibly become the future bawds, pimps, whores and bandits who inspired fear and fascination in Renaissance minds.

The view of women in 1900s Vienna was downright hostile. After the stock exchange crash of 1875, the liberal movement of previous years lost ground in the recession that followed along with the rise of political parties. Men were put in a state of uncertainty by the ideas of a theoretician of matriarchy named Bachofen who prophesied there would be a return to the feminine element in culture. In addition, a strong women's movement was striving for emancipation. The reaction was a hatred of women of all stripes.

This reaction gained more fuel from Sigmund Freud who made women a topic of research and Otto Weininger who wrote an incendiary book titled *Sex and Character.* A friend of Freud's, he borrowed some of his ideas, but wrote "human beings did not include women. Woman was matter without a soul, matter which was in contradiction to the ascetic mind."[3]

Weininger categorized women as either mother or prostitute. The mother type was committed to humanity, to the preservation of the species, but she is not very concerned with individuality of the people she loves, especially her own children. "The mother serves the purpose of the species, while the prostitute stands outside these purposes in the name of individuality."[4] He felt the most spiritually developed women were prostitutes who became muses to the men of artistic bent.

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Weininger also believed that women were dominated by sexuality because their reproductive organs were larger than the male reproductive organs. Because they couldn't control their sexual urges, they turned to prostitution which was "natural" for them. But who were the procurers of this sex for sale? Men! "Women's decadence was a product of masculine exploitation of her maternal instincts."[5] Males are the villains of the piece because they could mend their behavior in ways women could not. Therefore, the only reasonable way of coping with illicit sex was prohibition—and that meant anti-fornication laws. Thus, Angelo was in his element in *fin-de-siecle* Vienna!

> A friend of Freud's, he borrowed some of his ideas, but wrote "human beings did not include women. Woman was matter without a soul, matter which was in contradiction to the ascetic mind."[3]

Women? Help heaven! Men their creation mar
In profiting by them."
—Isabella, *Measure for Measure*

Bronner, Stephen E. and Wagner, F. Peter, eds. *The World of Yesterday: 1889-1914.* NJ: Humanities Press, 1997.

Janik, Allen. "Weininger's Vienna: the Sex-Ridden Society." Federal Chancellery, Federal Press Service. *Vienna Modernism 1890-1910*. Vienna, 1999.

Kamps, Ivo and Raber, Karen. *Measure for Measure Texts and Contexts.* Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's. 2004.

Luft, David S. *Eros and Inwardness in Vienna*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

1. Kamps and Raber, p. 182.
2. Kamps and Raber, p. 188.
3. Federal Chancellery, p. 5
4. Luft, p. 61.
5. Bronner and Wagner, p. 51.

The Mystery of *Isabella*

ISABELLA*: And have you nuns*
no further privileges?
NUN: *Are these not large enough?*
ISABELLA*: Yes, truly; I speak not as desiring more,*
But rather wishing a more strict restraint
Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare.
—Measure for Measure

Isabella wishes to join the order of nuns known as Poor Clares and her preference gives clues to her character and behavior.

St. Clare's story is about a determined young girl who pursued a religious life despite her noble family's objection. Born in Assisi in 1194, she became a follower of St. Francis and at age 17, joined the Franciscan order. She did so without telling her parents, which so incensed them that they tried to haul her out of church while she was taking her vows. During her life she defended the convent at Damiano from the marauding Saracens and advocated the "liberty of absolute poverty."[1] Clare's vision was to maintain a separate and relatively independent existence of her own order, one devoted to poverty and restrictive practices, which did not sit well with the church hierarchy. When the independence of the Poor Clares was challenged by church structure, Clare eloquently protested and convinced Pope Innocent IV of her order's special status. Two years after her death, she was canonized a saint.

Isabella's desire to commit herself to the Poor Clares is in direct opposition to the categorization of women as "maid, widow or wife" or the Viennese order of mother or prostitute. Angelo, in propositioning her, feels as a nun she is "none" and not really a woman. He says: "*Be that you are / That is, a woman/ If you be more/ You're none."* (II-iv-135-36). Isabella is unnatural to him because she is not sexually weak, but as rigidly virtuous as he thought he was.

Angelo lusts for Isabella because of her chastity and the mystery surrounding her. The mystery is heightened by the rules of St. Clare, according to Sister Francesca, which do not allow her to speak with a man, and if one has to, to avert her face (I-iv-10-13). Thus, Isabella's reluctance to venture from the convent to plead her brother's case and her initial reticence before Angelo are part of her order's conduct as well as the admired behavior of a refined woman. In Renaissance England a woman who talked too much put her reputation at risk and indicated a lack of self-discipline and self-control.

Isabella is unnatural to [Angelo] because she is not sexually weak, but as rigidly virtuous as he thought he was.

In contrast to the icy Isabella is the passionate Marianna, wildly in love with Angelo. Although he formerly spurned her because she had no dowry, she has been pining away for him. She eagerly participates in the "bed trick" and defends Angelo when the Duke sentences him. She argues that all men have faults but can become better. Perhaps she is Shakespeare's one exception to the ambiguous ending in this play. Her marriage to Angelo fulfills her dreams, if not his.

Marriage, if one will face the truth, is
an evil, but a necessary evil.
—Menander, c. 342-292 B.C.

Kamps, Ivo and Raber, Karen, eds. *Measure for Measure Texts and Contexts*. Boston:Oxford/ St. Martin's, 2004.

Wheeler, Richard P. *Shakespeare's Development and the Problem Comedies.* Berkeley:University of California Press, 1981.

1. Kamps and Raber, p. 195.

Shakespeare's View of *Marriage*

In Stephen Greenblatt's highly speculative but entertaining book, *Will in the World*, he gives some evidence of how Shakespeare felt about the institution of marriage.

A 19th century bibliophile, Sir Thomas Phillipps, found a document in the Bishop of Worcester's registry. Dated November 28, 1582, the document was a bond for £40 put up in order to hasten the wedding of "William Shagspere and Anne Hathwey of Stratford in the Dioces of Worcester maiden."[1] The reason for the rush was explained six months later on May 28, 1583: the baptism of Susanna Shakespeare.

It is not known how Will's family felt about the marriage of their 18-year-old son to a pregnant 26-year-old bride. It is likely that Anne was the prime source of the impatience that led to the marriage. Shame and social disgrace were common in Shakespeare's time; bastard children were frowned upon especially when the community had to clothe and feed them.

Will's attitude toward Anne can be ascertained from their living arrangements. For most of his married life Will lived in London and Anne and the children remained in Stratford. Since Anne could neither read nor write, Will wrote her no love letters. Everything he sent her from London had to be read by a neighbor; her messages to him were consigned to a messenger. But Will fulfilled his responsibilities as a family man. When he made some money in the theatre, he established his wife and children in a fine house in Stratford and visited them frequently. Finally, he chose to retire early and returned permanently to Stratford a few years before he died.

But there are hints in his works of the tensions in male/female relationships. First, in many plays, there are no wives. There is no "Mrs. Bolingbroke, Mrs. Shylock, Mrs. Leonato, Mrs. Brabanzio, Mrs. Lear, Mrs. Prospero."[2] Secondly, Shakespeare did not conjure up a couple with long-term prospects for happiness. For example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the love between Lysander and Hermia vanishes quickly, while Demetrius and Helena will last as long as the love dust in their eyes does. Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* must overcome his callow behavior at their wedding ceremony. Only Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado* offer any possibility of marital intimacy—if they can suppress their insults and forget they have been tricked into wooing.

But there are hints in his works of the tensions in male/female relationships. First, in many plays, there are no wives. … Secondly, Shakespeare did not conjure up a couple with long-term prospects for happiness.

Sometime between 1602 and 1606, Shakespeare brought the latent tensions in these earlier comedies to the surface in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well.* In *Measure for Measure,* Claudio and Juliet have consummated their marriage without a public ceremony. When Angelo embarks on his ruthless campaign against fornication, Claudio is arrested and condemned to die. In prison he seems ready to admit he did wrong.

> *Our natures do pursue/Like rats that raven down their proper bane/A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.* (I-ii-108-110).

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"The natural desire that can be so frankly and comfortably acknowledged within the bounds of marriage becomes a poison outside of it."[3] In addition, Marianna insists on marrying Angelo despite his lying, conniving, and slandering; Duke Vincentio proposes to Isabella despite her wishes to enter a nunnery, and the Duke punishes Lucio by ordering him to marry a woman he has impregnated. Lucio pleads, but the Duke is insistent on what he equates to "*pressing to death, whipping, and hanging*." (V-i-508, 515, 516.) In *All's Well that Ends Well,* the beautiful, accomplished Helena will have no other but the loutish Count Bertram. Despite all his resistance, she gets this despicable dolt, but one doubts that their future is rosy.

As the father of two growing daughters, Shakespeare must have had fears of premarital sex, knowing how the result could force a man and woman into marriage. In *The Tempest,* Prospero gives a stern warning to the young man who is courting his daughter. There is a sense that Shakespeare is looking back at his own unhappy marriage and the way it all happened.

If thou dost break her virgin knot before
All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rite be ministered,
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow; but barren hate,
Sour-eyed disdain, and discord, shall bestow
The union of your beds with weeds so loathly
That you shall hate it both." (IV-i-14-22)

Greenblatt's theory about these plays is that they "seem to be the expression of a deep skepticism about the long-term prospects for happiness in marriage, even though the plays continue to insist upon marriage as the only legitimate and satisfactory resolution to human desire."[4]

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World*. NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 2004.

1. Greenblatt, p. 120.
2. Greenblatt, p. 133.
3. Greenblatt, p. 136.
4. Greenblatt, p. 142.

The Law in *Measure for Measure* as interpreted in the 21st Century

The law embodies the story of a nation's development through many centuries, and it cannot be dealt with as if it contained only the axioms and corollaries of a book of mathematics."
—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
The Common Law (1881), lecture 1.

In Daniel J. Kornstein's book, *Kill All the Lawyers: Shakespeare's Legal Appeal,* the author contends Shakespeare knew much about legal intricacies; legal themes of one kind or another run through several of his plays. The playwright himself and his father had personal experiences with the law. His father John brought a lawsuit against his brother-in-law, Edmund Lambert, over 44 acres of John's land used as collateral for a £40 loan. The land, which was Will's inheritance, was contested for 20 years and finally awarded to Lambert. Meanwhile, Will's father was rebuked by the court for wasting their time. In addition, John Shakespeare was accused twice of violating usury laws, an experience Will used in *The Merchant of Venice.* But the son was almost as litigious as the father. He sued debtors over owing small sums of money. He was persistent in asserting his rights and complained about the slowness of the legal system and lawyers in general.

In *Measure for Measure*, Kornstein applies a 20th-century interpretation to the problem of law and morality. When Angelo decrees fornication is punishable by death, he is delving into private morality. Kornstein says that public morality influences our criminal law. He argues that public morality is a "blend of custom and conviction, of reason and feeling, of experience and prejudice."[1] But the problem of law and morality is complex and divisive. Kornstein believes two kinds of moral principles exist in modern society: those adopted for our own guidance without attempting to impose them on others (for example, certain religious practices) and those beyond toleration and imposed on all (example: monogamy). Since society cannot exist without some kind of order, it cannot exist without some moral conformity.

Any law to enforce morals involves the issue of privacy. The Supreme Court has called "privacy the ability independently to define one's identity, which is central in any concept of liberty."[2] Among these privacy rights are sex between consenting adults; including marriage, contraception and bearing or not bearing children. It is likely, then, that Angelo's law as applied to Claudio and Juliet would not pass constitutional muster. Even though Robert Bork, a 1987 nominee for the Supreme Court, said that the "constitutional right to privacy is wholly manufactured and limitless," the Senate did not agree.[3] He was not approved and never became a Supreme Court Justice.

If the law is going to be used to enforce morals, the legislators must be sure to gauge the morals correctly. Law should reflect the "felt necessities of the time," according to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes or, as Shakespeare referred to it in *Julius Caesar,* as "the tide in the affairs of men."[4] This situation was illustrated by the Prohibition Amendment (number 18), which curtailed the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. When the imbibers couldn't acquire their liquor, they manufactured it illegally or turned to criminal sources. If a law is "more mocked than feared" and lacks public respect, then it will be disobeyed. Even Angelo cannot follow his law when he sees Isabella. To enforce an unpopular, harsh law does not win public respect; it is rather a form of tyranny.

In addition, there is a question about whether a statute that has not been enforced and has not been obeyed for several years may suddenly be resurrected or applied. If a statute falls into disuse, it is called desuetude, which implies it has been nullified through disuse. But if the law is enforced and someone prosecuted, there has been no fair warning that is considered a prime requirement for the rule of law.

Shakespeare's anti-fornication law carries a death penalty, a harsh punishment which brings up the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. This ban on cruel and unusual punishment changes with time and is not static. Still the Court holds that the

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Eighth Amendment "must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society."[5] Centuries ago in England and Vienna the death penalty was common for even trivial crimes, but over time the standards of decency led to infrequent use of capital punishment. In this country, the death penalty has always been controversial; thus, the Supreme Court has carefully defined the circumstances where it may be applied.

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In many ways *Measure for Measure* describes power, its nature and its abuses. When Angelo is appointed to take the Duke's place, his character changes and he ignores Isabella's insightful logic. For the inflexible and unyielding Angelo, fornication out of wedlock is evil because it "steals from the state the right to control the generation of legitimate children."[6] By Angelo's logic, he is the monarch, the true "father", who has the right to determine who and when subjects may marry. Anyone who defies him is stealing his authority.

Another abuse of power is Angelo's sexual harassment of Isabella. When she warns him that she will tell the world what kind of man he is, Angelo snaps, "Who will believe thee, Isabella?" (II-iv-154). It's her word against his, and as monarch, Angelo believes his position is undeniable. The power has been delegated to him, but not judiciously. Angelo is not a leader, but a follower, "a natural underling incapable of balanced decision-making."[7] Rather than take responsibility for his decisions, he takes refuge behind the law.

All the legal problems in *Measure for Measure* are subordinate to one all-encompassing theme: the theory of legal interpretation. Angelo stands for a government of laws that ignores human factors, feelings and foibles. In contrast, Escalus and Duke Vincentio take a more moderate view of the law. They see it as "administered by people and softened by realism, politics, equity, mercy, justice and flexibility."[8] For them, the spirit of the law, not the letter, should be used in interpreting it.

In the play Shakespeare poses the question: is any man or woman fit to judge a fellow human being? If so, the playwright gives a prescription for a good judge that resonates today. He or she should (1) understand the nature of the people, (2) understand our institutions, (3) know the terms for common justice, (4) believe the law should be enforced, but in moderation and with equity.

Could all Supreme Court nominees pass this cross-examination?

Kamps, Ivo and Raber, Karen, eds. *Measure for Measure: Texts and Contexts.* Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2004.

Kornstein, Daniel J. *Kill All the Lawyers: Shakespeare's Legal Appeal.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

1. Kornstein, p. 37.
2. Kornstein, p. 43.
3. Kornstein, p. 44.
4. Kornstein, p. 45.
5. Kornstein, p. 50.
6. Kamps and Raber, p. 192.
7. Kornstein, p. 56.
8. Kornstein, p. 60.

Vienna at the Turn of the Century

The setting for this production of *Measure for Measure* is Vienna in the early 1900s. It was a period of diverse political and intellectual ideas, an abundance of art and a market for decadence. *Fin-de-siécle* Vienna was full of turmoil and tension.

Vienna had grown up within the huge medieval city walls long after other major cities had razed them. When the walls were removed in 1857, there was a great swath of land surrounding the city center; it was decided to use this wide semi-circle of land to build a phenomenal street of gigantic buildings. Thus, the *Ringstrasse* was created, an elegant area of residences for the Hapsburg monarchy, the bulk of the aristocracy, the ascendant bourgeoisie and the intellectual class. The street had two functions: to celebrate and protect the glory and grandeur of the Hapsburg empire and to separate the ruling classes from the working class and underclasses who lived outside it.

Franz Joseph of the Hapsburg dynasty was emperor of Austria from 1848 to 1916. His reign was marked by personal tragedies: his brother Maximilian was executed in Mexico; his son Prince Rudolph committed suicide in 1889, and his wife, Elizabeth, was assassinated in Geneva in 1897. In addition, the Catholic church, which had long dominated Austrian life, was attacked by a *Los van Rom* (Free from Rome) movement which used pamphlets and speeches "to rob Catholics of their confidence in their priests, the holy sacraments, and the Church."[1] The repressive attitude of the Church toward anything new was partially responsible for the creation of political parties and the intellectual achievements of the era.

It was a period of diverse political and intellectual ideas, an abundance of art and a market for decadence.

Beneath Vienna's relative affluence and saturated feeling of security there was a feeling of unrest. The Viennese openly resented the *zugeraster* (outsiders) who poured into the city, mostly poor people with large families. They saw them as alien elements diluting their culture and polluting their city. This political and social turmoil of the late 19th century helped shape the anti-Semitic atmosphere in which Sigmund Freud lived and worked in Vienna and foreshadowed the rise of Nazism. Freud's lectures and writings on sexuality as a basis of the unconscious upset a society "intent on appearance, on the maintenance of decorum and respectability."[2] Freud, too, was a *zugeraster*.

It was Freud who furnished the hypothesis for the great artistic creations that came out of the turn of the century tensions. Since one's sexual drive was taboo, sexual drive had to be sublimated into something positive. So it was the repression of sexual life that generated this wealth of cultural creation. Among the outstanding visual artists was Gustav Klimt. His subject was women: high society types, sweet young things, pregnant women and nude women. He also depicted "demonic, malevolent female figures with androgynous attributes."[3] Klimt founded the Secessionist school which created a new unsettling and exciting concept of beauty. One of the members was Egon Schiele who discarded the idea of goodness in beauty and painted numerous self-portraits and nude drawings that are blatantly realistic and sometimes embarrassing. His good friend, Oskar Kokoschka "incorporated the ugly into his art with a view to enhancing [its] emotional impact."[4] His works confront the viewer with a

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misogynistic, disrupted and sick world that despised women.

In the field of music Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) was heralded first as a conductor, then as a composer. Classified as a post-Romantic, he wrote nine symphonies and died writing the tenth. His symphonies require a large array of players and singers, as well as unusual instruments. He also wrote song cycles, such as "Das Lied von der Erde" (The Song of the Earth) which brought into balance the dualism of ecstatic pleasure underlaid with deadly foreboding, a characteristic of the period in which he was writing.

Arnold Schöenberg's intention was the "emancipation of dissonance." His works were short, in opposition to the compositions of Mahler and Brückner; he also reduced the size of the orchestra. He developed a mode of composition with his 12-tone scale which dissolved customary tonality and left the composer free to use any combination of tones, however unsettling.

Other intellectual achievements included the architecture of Adolf Loos, Otto Wagner and Josef Hoffmann and the literature of Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The turn of the century in Vienna was a period of transition in which all the seeds of the disasters of the 20th century were sown.

Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they could have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety.

—Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
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1. new advent.org, p. 11.
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3. Federal Chancellery, p. 14.
4. Federal Chancellery, p. 16.

Activities

Questions for Study

1. Is Isabella's decision not to save her brother justified?
2. Isabella says that she would gladly give her life to save Claudio. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
3. Why does Mariana agree to the Duke's plan?
4. Why does the Duke lie to Isabella about her brother's death?
5. Although *Measure for Measure*'s plot is complicated, it could be argued that its characters are simple. How would you support or refute this statement?
6. Does Isabella function as a symbol of femininity? Why or why not?
7. Is the play's conclusion satisfying? Why or why not?
8. Why is marriage a punishment for many of the characters?
9. How is death treated? What does this say about the relative value placed on people's lives?
10. Does the Duke help Isabella only because he is in love with her?

Thought and Discussion Questions

1. In what way(s) is this play a Problem Play? What social ills are being criticized? What techniques does Shakespeare employ to make sure his audience is made aware of these social evils?

2. Both Angelo and Isabella come off poorly to most readers. What moral or character defects do they have? How are their problems representative? Universal? Problematic? Does either of them learn anything through the course of the play? If so, what is learned and by what means; if not, why does no learning occur?

3. The play has much to say about the law. What does it say about those who enforce the law? What does it say about the difference between the letter and the spirit of the law? (e.g., what difference is there between the situation between Claudio and **Juliet** and that between Angelo and Mariana?) Is justice served at the end of the play? Explain your response.

4. Does the play present the Duke as a good ruler? If he is not a good ruler at the beginning, has he improved by the end? Why or why not?

5. Think about the staging of the final scene, especially the very end of the play. Is the ending "happy"? Is it dramatically and thematically satisfying? How would you stage/block it? Why?

6. Compare and contrast *Measure for Measure* with other comedies—Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean, classical and modern.

7. What is Lucio's role in the play? Does he deserve the punishment he receives? Why or why not?

8. What is the function of the comic subplot (the Pompey plot)? In what way(s) does it comment on or interpret the main action of the play?

Exercise in Editing *Measure for Measure*

Below you will find a crucial passage from *Measure for Measure*.

- Write out your version of how the speech should appear in a modern version.
- Use modern spelling.
- Pay particular attention to (1) punctuation (particularly important as signals for an actor's sense of time) and (2) lineation (keep in mind the blank verse line as norm).
- Add any stage directions you deem necessary (e.g., does Isabella kneel? If so, when?).

Mar. *Oh Isabel: will you not lend a knee?*

Duke. *He dies for Claudio's death.*

Isab. *Most bounteous Sir.*
Looke if it please you, on this man condemn?d,
As if my Brother liu'd: I partly thinke,
A due sinceritie gouemed his deedes,
Till he did looke on me: Since it is so,
Let him not die: my Brother had but Iustice,
In that he did the thing for which he dide.
For Angelo, his Act did not ore take his bad intent,
And must be buried but as an intent
That Perished by the way: thoughts are no subjects
Intents, but meerely thoughts.

Mar. *Meerely my Lord.*

Performance Activity for *Measure for Measure* — I

Performance choices help define and communicate a character. Consider how those choices affect later action and character development throughout the play. At the end of *Measure for Measure*, the Duke has the opportunity to pardon several people—Angelo and Lucio, most significantly, but also the Provost—and to propose to Isabella. How he has related to these characters earlier will have a significant effect on the ending of the play. This exercise is designed to provide you with an opportunity to experiment with several readings/scenarios from early in the play and then to discover how the earlier readings will affect later stagings (as well as later audience perception). In each case, an early scene is given with several possibilities. Then, the appropriate sections from Act V are noted. Develop each scenario; then discuss the various presentations. Next, present the section from Act V and discuss how the earlier readings affect that final moment.

First Reading: Isabella is crushed by the news and passively accepts Friar Lodowick's control. Isabella collapses into a puppet. Her grief overcomes even her rage at Angelo, and she can do little on her own but bewail her situation. The Duke is master of the moment, cold and even cynical in his hypocrisy, seeming to show concern for her but actually gloating at his absolute control over his pawn. A number of his lines may be read in an ironic way, or in such a way that the audience cannot miss his duplicity. His position is superior to Isabella's in every way; at some point, she may actually sink to the ground at his feet.

Second Reading: After hearing the news that their plot to save Claudio has failed, Isabella doubts the Friar's promise to obtain redress of her grievance. Facing disaster, Isabella coolly assesses the situation. The Friar's advice to save her brother's life has failed. Can he be trusted further? Can his extravagant promises be believed? She has good reason to be critical of the credibility of a man whom she has known so briefly.

Here, a self-possessed Isabella is shown in the process of independent judgment. Her anger at Angelo is icy and she does not lose control when her tears come. When she agrees to be directed by the Friar still further, she is motivated not by respect for the Friar but by the desire to punish Angelo, which she cannot accomplish alone. Isabella's famous pauses may now number three: she may wait to make up her mind before her line, "I am directed by you," and when she delivers the line, she may not be completely resolute on the matter.

The Duke may be interested to see her reaction to his false information or he may be setting up his test of her capacity for forgiveness in the trial scene. His stage position may be on a level with that of Isabella or even inferior to it.

Third Reading: Hysterical, Isabella blames Friar Lodowick as well as Angelo for her brother's death, and only her desire for revenge on Angelo makes her agree to follow the Friar's direction further.

Women are ten times frail, after all. Isabella has a terrible temper to struggle with, and she also has a judgmental streak. When she hears that the Friar's elaborate intrigue has not saved Claudio's life but has cost it, she lashes out at the Friar. She would like to "pluck out" Angelo's eyes most of all, but she may transfer some of her rage onto the man before her whose plan has ended in dis-

aster. She may be unwilling to stop weeping when the Friar asks her to stop; she may even attempt to strike him.

This Duke may be anticipating an outburst from Isabella, but even so he may be surprised at its ferocity. He may be condescending toward Isabella, kindly or sternly so. Her reaction may tend to legitimize his "taking her in hand," since she clearly needs lessons in self-control. This Isabella may attempt to gain the stronger position and the Duke may give stage in self-defense, but these positions may be reversed by the end of this encounter.

Fourth Reading: Amidst her grief for her brother, Isabella realizes that she is in love with Friar Lodowick.

Isabella may be distressed at the news the Friar brings, but the Friar has gone so far into her affections that the blow is cushioned by his presence. Without reluctance, Isabella listens to the Friar's advice and gives signs of agreement. She recovers almost immediately from her grief and sets about the task of redressing her brother's wrong. Her confidence in the Friar is unshaken.

The Duke may show signs of affection however decorous. His heavenly comforts of despair seem already to have begun. This Duke and this Isabella may be on a level in terms of stage position and dominance.

Performance Activity for *Measure for Measure* - II

GOALS

(1) To practice transforming the words on the page into speech in action.

(2) To understand the complex task of creating a full action from the less than full cues provided by the text as script.

(3) To model how one can create the seeds for a performance through interpreting the text in writing.

(4) To model how the choices made in a character's first or early appearance can create the range of possibilities for subsequent scenes, subsequent development.

(5) To experience a variety of performances that illuminate how divergent the performances of a single scene can be.

There are a number of reasons to explore this apparently small scene. Although it is not the longest scene for the Provost, it is a moment of intimacy and apparent compassion that can establish his keynote for all that follows. For Juliet, it is her second appearance, her only textually mandated appearance without Claudio, and the best opportunity for the actress to create a specific, unique Juliet rather than the generic person created in many productions. And for the Duke it is his first appearance as the Friar, hence the moment when he begins to establish how he plays this role—which is to say how well or ill he impersonates the holy office he has assumed. The scene establishes a baseline for all that follows since he remains in this guise until the last half of the last scene of the play.

For these reasons and for the pedagogic purposes of focusing attention on the range of ways a role can be transformed into a character, each of the three scenarios presented here center around only one of the *dramatis personae*. Whereas in performance one might experiment with all three in quite varied permutations, for the purposes of this activity the aim is to make each scenario artificially illuminate the interpretations of a single role. Obviously, if you find the results rich enough and decide you can devote more time to this scene, you can continue to experiment with more complex permutations of these single ranges, now integrated into a single performance.

Choose nine students in groups of three: each scene needs a Juliet, a Provost, and a Duke as Friar.

You will need nine copies of the text of *Measure for Measure,* act 2, scene 3.

Let each group rehearse, the three performances, and spend some time discussing them. Spend as much time as needed if you want fuller discussion, especially if you want to articulate some of the principles for reading differently inherent in the activity.

Talk very briefly about the importance of small but relatively early scenes for establishing how a role can be transformed into a specific presentation of a character, and how as readers we often neglect such early small scenes.

Understand that, both to explore this play and

to help acquire new skills at reading play texts, nine of you will be rehearsing and performing in three versions of 2.3. In order to help discover some key variables in this type of reading and rehearsing, each group will work with a different scenario that specifies some but not all of the choices for one role.

1. Choose groups or work with ongoing groups.

2. Choose one scenario for each group. Here are the three scenarios:

Scenario 1: Juliet. Juliet is the woman who participates in the only marriage we see as freely entered into and based on mutual love as well as the only marriage that will produce a child. (Kate Keepdown's child, fathered by Lucio, is born out of wedlock and Lucio only marries Kate under duress.) This scene is the best opportunity to establish not only each production's Juliet but also offer a moment where this particular Juliet can project how she understands and assesses her own actions and the nature of her transgression or sin. For this first scenario, the key is to present Juliet as absolutely sure of what she is doing, secure in her love for Claudio and trusting his love for her, and, while aware that they have sinned, completely unable to accept the validity of the law they have broken. She repents of the act, but not of her love or the child to be. These are sources of joy to her. And her certainty impresses, perhaps even nonplusses, the Duke Friar even as it moves the Provost's compassion. Her interruption of the Friar is thus respectful and yet self-assured. Her objective here is to both repent and yet maintain her sense of her own integrity and the validity of what she sees as a perfectly legitimate marriage as indeed it is under the civil if not canon law. She has no idea that Claudio really might be and indeed has been condemned to death, and the news is a horrifling shock to her.

Scenario 2: Duke as Friar. The Duke finds new authority as he tests out the role of Friar—it seems to offer him a chance to do good for his subjects in a new way, perhaps even to redeem the evil his acknowledged laxity has encouraged. He performs impressively, demonstrates genuine concern for and care of Juliet,
and truly does abhor the sin yet love sinner. The performance here should make us see that his manipulations are not only justified but will eventually insure a wise outcome. This is a Duke who does indeed seem saintly if not Godlike. And he is aware that this first performance is also a test of his own human resources as well as of his ability to perform a sacred office, which places upon its human occupant an especially charged burden. Thus his primary objective is to confess Juliet property for her soul's sake, while his secondary objective is to perform the Friar's part with integrity. And the assurance with which he achieves these objectives should, in an ideal performance, let us see his own sense of the demands made upon him: he should be assured but not certain he can do this, and above all not blind to the potential for abuse and failure in this new role. Furthermore, his performance should at once impress and reassure both Juliet and the Provost.

Scenario 3: Provost. The Provost, like Escalus, has grown into his office, and has achieved a wisdom, a balance between the strictness necessary to deal with hardened criminals and the compassion to deal with redeemable sinners and those who do not deserve full punishment. (This is to say that he has the exact balance that the Duke should have.) Assuming that this Friar, with his self-proclaimed extensive experience, has achieved a similar balance, and trusting to his discretion, he tells the Friar that Claudio is to die tomorrow, even though his compassion and hope for reprieve have led him to withhold the news from Juliet. Thus at the end of the scene when he realizes that the Friar is going to indiscreetly and thoughtlessly blurt out this news, and aware of how dangerous such a shock may be to Juliet's unborn child, the Provost is appalled. Stunned, he nonetheless is quick-witted enough to seek to stop the Friar while not letting Juliet see what he is doing. He is angered by what the Friar does, exasperated at himself for not preventing this small disaster, but most of all concerned to help Juliet deal with this frightful fact. As the Friar exits, therefore, the Provost is left to comfort the shattered Juliet while barely able to contain the shock and anger he feels at the Friar. Indirectly,

the Provost's reaction will prompt spectators to recognize that the Duke-as-Friar has betrayed a confidence in a manner that bodes ill for what happens later in the play. The scene not only causes intense suffering for Juliet, then, but should also make some or perhaps all of the spectators uneasy about the Duke's ability to control the new state of affairs he has unleashed.

4. Each group should take 10-I5 minutes to grasp the scenario, work out ways to enact that scenario, including many details the scenario does not mandate, and rehearse their performance several times.

5. The first group performs the first scenario. When it is done, everyone has two minutes to take notes on whatever is of interest. Repeat for a second and third performance. (Students who have just completed their scene can be asked to write a note about what they discovered in performing it.)

6. Whole class discussion should follow, looking at what each performance communicated, what surprised the spectators in each version, and what the range of versions suggests. You have an option to articulate what you have learned about how to read play texts from this activity.

Discussion should begin with observations about the different performances, and especially the way in which each performance has surprised some spectators, as the words and actions created versions of each role that they may not previously have imagined. You have the option to keep a sharp focus on the language and how each speech can be made to do quite different actions. Observation of each scene moves naturally into the differences among scenes. And discussing those differences also should lead directly to the consequences of each scenario for later scenes in the play and for our relationship with each of the characters.

You may want to pursue questions about how to integrate several of these performances, and how they might either harmonize or create effective dissonances. Last, you may articulate, as best you can, some principles for reading play texts that can be applied to later scenes in this play and to scenes in subsequent plays.

Colorado Model Content Standards; Reading and Writing

1. Students read and understand a variety of materials.
2. Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
3. Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
4. Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.
5. Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media and reference sources.
6. Students read and recognize literature as a