

Introductory Notes

The primary source of Shakespearean text used in these plays is the First Folio, with the exception of Quarto versions for *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. The non-Shakespearean text has undergone three incarnations: the first was the preparation of manuscripts for rehearsal purposes that were generated by the stated authors; the second was the emergence of performance scripts that owe a debt of gratitude to all the performers involved because of their improvised contributions during both the rehearsal processes and performances; and finally the current printed versions, which have been revised and emended in order to make reading editions of what are first and foremost performance texts.

Each installment of the *Sports Canon* is divided into five Acts and a number of scenes. The Act divisions are a compliment to Shakespeare and the scene divisions are really only for organization of rehearsals. They are all designed to be fast-paced one-act plays, and therefore any “structural” divisions should be read with continuity and not as indicators of possible breaks in the action.

There are a number of current events and pop culture references in each play for purposes of comic association and parody. However, some of the references may be only identified within a Canadian context – and arguably from a specific “dominant culture” perspective. Therefore, if granted performance rights, productions are encouraged to modify the text to their cultural and geographic needs and to make associations that their local audiences will identify with and appreciate.

The five plays of the *Sports Canon* include:

- *Shakespeare’s Rugby Wars (SRW)*: an adaptation of the Wars of the Roses tetralogy: *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, 3, and Richard III*. It sets up the rivalry between the two Royal Houses, Lancaster and York, as they scrum it out for the rugby crown.
- *Shakespeare’s World Cup (SWC)*: an adaptation of the more popular and studied tragedies: *Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, and Othello* – with a dash of *Romeo and Juliet* thrown in for good measure. Four clubs: Team Denmark, Team England, Team Scotland, and Team Italy, battle it out for tragic dominance. In addition, SWC was written just prior to the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup and therefore uses that as a backdrop.
- *Shakespeare’s Gladiator Games (SGG)*: an adaptation of the more tragic Greek and Roman plays: *Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Troilus and Cressida, and Timon of Athens*. It follows a typical “day at the games” in Ancient Rome which usually

consisted of: a morning hunt, a re-enactment of a famous battle, noontime public executions, and afternoon gladiatorial duels. It also pays homage to the most elaborate of Roman spectacle entertainment: the naval battle re-enactment.

- *Shakespeare's Comic Olympics (SCO)*: an adaptation of all the Comedies and Romances. A large athletic event such as the Olympics lends itself favourably for the adaptation of such a large number of plays. *SCO* is unique amongst the *Sports Canon* family for a number of reasons, the most prominent being that it resembles more of a series of self-contained comic sketches. Rather than drawing on one sport that develops over the play, *SCO* consists of many sports – most of which only last a minute or two. In addition, *SCO* was written prior to the 2004 Athens Olympics and uses that as a backdrop.
- *Shakespeare's NHL (SNHL)*: an adaptation of the remaining history plays: *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, and *Henry VIII*. It pays homage to Canadian street hockey and the “Original Six” – a group of six teams that made up the National Hockey League during the “golden years” of hockey in North America. In addition, *SNHL* was written during the NHL “Lockout” Season of 2004/05 and uses that as a backdrop.

The primary purpose of these plays is to blend theatre with sports. As such, they should be seen as a template to guide your own local production, rather than a rigid form that should be precisely reproduced according to the original presentation.

Enjoy.