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Thou Art Here's Production of 'Shakespeare's Will' Set to Play in Historic Cemetery

 September 12, 2018 • by [Tamanna Khurana](#) • [Add Comment](#)


The Edmonton Cemetery Mausoleum will serve as a set in Thou Art Here's production of "Shakespeare's Will." / Supplied

Taking Shakespeare out of the Theatre

Thou Art Here Theatre is named to represent exactly what they do: Shakespeare anywhere. Anywhere being historic sites, bars, playgrounds, malls, and—sometimes—even in a theatre. Their newest production, *Shakespeare's Will*, is a locally written play by Vern Thiessen about Anne Hathaway, William Shakespeare's much forgotten wife. This one takes place in the Historic 1886 Edmonton Cemetery.

"A lot of our venues have been heritage sites," explains Thou Art Here's founder, Andrew Ritchie. "So it's thinking about places people don't use very often or don't go to, and finding ways to activate it, and get people engaged in it. For this one, I walked by cemeteries all the time and they kind of scare me. I loved walking by them in the middle of the night and I thought 'Can a show happen in a cemetery?'"

Ritchie and Neil Kuefler created Thou Art Here out of their passion for Shakespeare, and their need to produce shows on students' budgets. It's also an opportunity to celebrate Shakespearian culture by breaking the fourth wall. Audience participation isn't necessary at this production of *Shakespeare's Will*, but the roving show is still highly interactive as you follow Anne Hathaway around.

Thou Art Here has altered the play, which is written as a one-woman monologue, to instead feature five women who represent Hathaway at different stages of time. The space in the cemetery allows the group to work with distance, which cannot usually be done in theatre spaces. It also gives five unique female voices to the character.

"This play does put his work into question," Ritchie says about Shakespeare. "It takes away this idea of him as this godly playwright, and strips him away as more of a man. He was able to have so much respect because of so many of the sacrifices this woman made and in the end she was forgotten. That is something I think we were very interested in exploring."

The play has heavy themes and asks daunting questions like: How will you be remembered?

The director of the Freewill Shakespeare Festival commissioned Thiessen to write the play over a decade ago, and it has since been performed around the world by Shakespeare enthusiasts, despite being critical of The Bard himself. It brings forward a relatable feminist narrative from the depths of theatre history, and follows the movement in an attempt to remove the patriarchal lens from every story.

"That was kind of a big inspiration for the play," Ritchie explains. "For me, a big part of the play is 'How did she fight to be defined not by her husband, not by a man?'"

Despite these intense themes, the production is still meant to be fun. There are bits of humour, dance, and music all included in the first full production show to ever take place in an Edmonton cemetery. Ritchie explains that they work to have the venue as its own character and showcase its unique personality.

"We're not trying to take something away from the site and pretend it's not a cemetery," Ritchie says. "We want to highlight that it is one, and [that] it is a space you can engage with every day if you want."

Sept. 19 – 30

Shakespeare's Will

Historic 1886 Edmonton Cemetery (11820 107 Ave)

Tickets: yeglive.ca

\$25 Regular

\$15 Student/Artist

Rain or shine

#Andrew Ritchie #Shakespeare's Will #Thou Art Here Theatre #William Shakespeare



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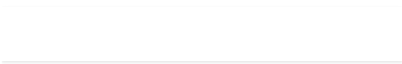
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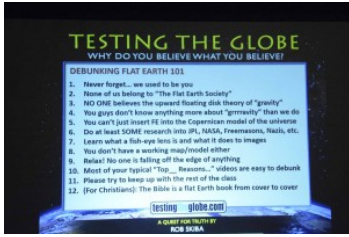


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