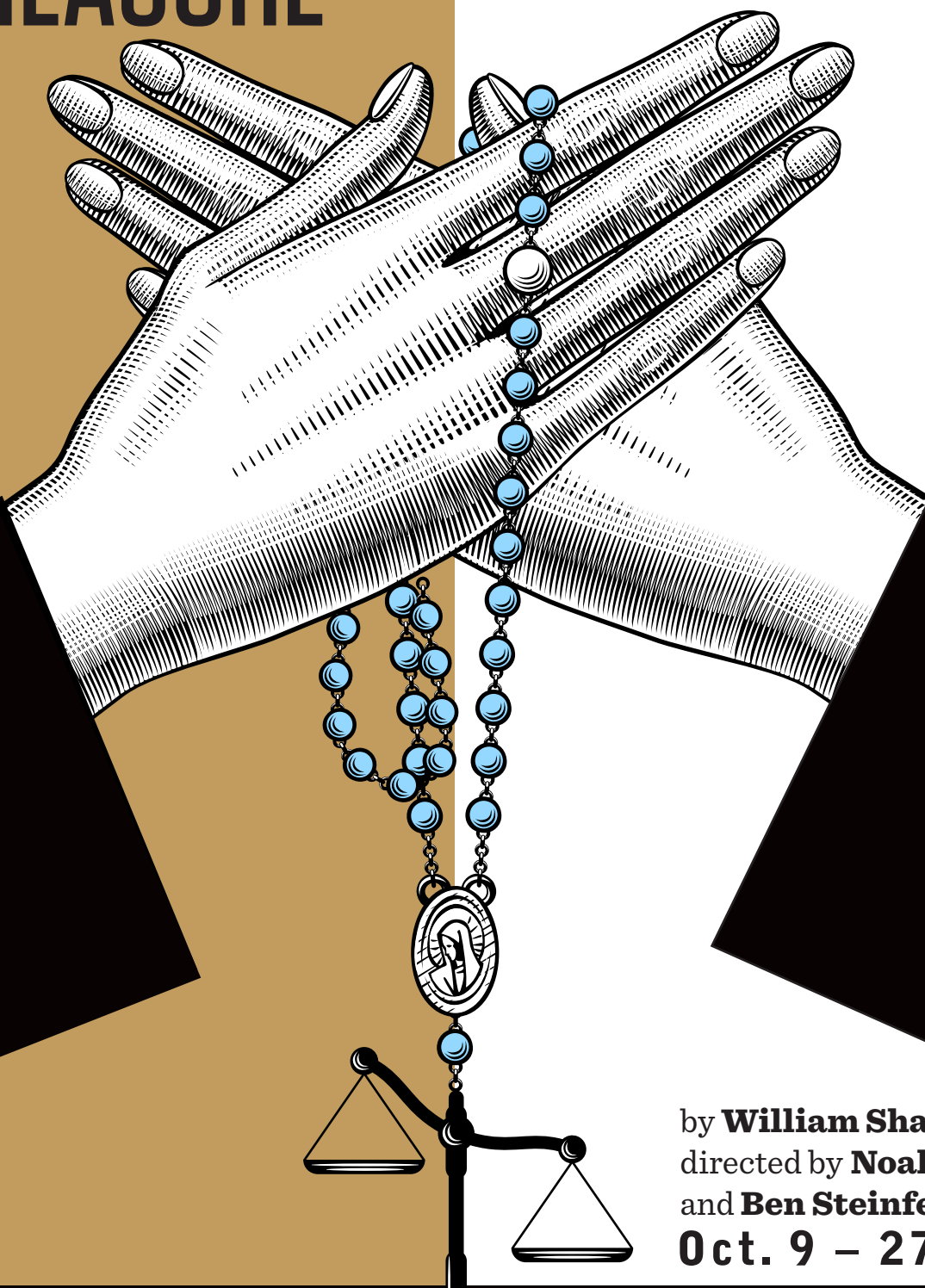


Actors Theatre of Louisville presents
The Fiasco Theater's production of

MEASURE FOR MEASURE



by **William Shakespeare**
directed by **Noah Brody**
and **Ben Steinfeld**
Oct. 9 – 27, 2019

PLAY GUIDE

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ABOUT THIS PLAY GUIDE

This play guide is a resource designed to enhance your theatre experience. Its goal is twofold: to nurture the teaching and learning of theatre arts and to encourage essential questions that lead to an enduring understanding of the play's meaning and relevance. Inside you will find information about the plot and characters within the play, as well as articles that contextualize the play and its production at Actors Theatre of Louisville. Oral discussion and writing prompts encourage your students to reflect upon their impressions, analyze key ideas and relate them to their personal experiences and the world around them. These prompts can easily be adapted to fit most writing objectives. We encourage you to adapt and extend the material in any way that best fits the needs of your community of learners. Please feel free to make copies of this guide, or you may download it from our website at actorstheatre.org. We hope this material, combined with our pre-show workshops, will give you the tools to make your time at Actors Theatre a valuable learning experience.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE STUDENT MATINEES AND THIS PLAY GUIDE ADDRESS SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6
Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

TH.Re7.1 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

TH.Re8.1 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

TH.Re9.1 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

TH.Cn10.1 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

TH.Cn11.1.1 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding our play guides, please contact Abigail Miskowicz, Learning & Creative Engagement Associate, at 502.584.1265 ext.3065.

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE SYNOPSIS

In the streets of rowdy Vienna, good times are under siege as Lord Angelo cracks down on vice in the Duke's absence. When her brother is turned into a scapegoat, Isabella discovers that Angelo's mercy can be bought—but what will she do if the price is too high? Imaginative ensemble Fiasco Theater brings gorgeous music, their passion for language and brilliant comic storytelling to one of Shakespeare's most provocative plays.

SETTING

Vienna, a majority Catholic city in the Holy Roman Empire, from the Duke's palace to the streets of the city. Early 1600s.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE DUKE – The leader of Vienna who grants Angelo temporary powers to enforce the city's harsh laws. Disguises himself as a friar to keep an eye on Angelo.

ANGELO – A noble of Vienna who oversees the city while the Duke is away.

CLAUDIO – A young man of Vienna. Arrested on the order of Angelo.

ISABELLA – Sister to Claudio. Determined to become a nun.

FRIAR PETER – A monk who helps disguise the Duke as a friar.

MISTRESS OVERDONE – The owner of a successful brothel.

MARIANA – Angelo's former betrothed.

LUCIO – A man who spends his time at brothels.

POMPEY – A pimp for Mistress Overdone's brothel.

ESCALUS – A counselor to the Duke who becomes Angelo's chief advisor.

FRANCISCA – A nun.

ELBOW – A constable.

FROTH – A foolish man who spends time in the brothel.

BARNARDINE – An imprisoned man.

ABOUT THE COMPANY: FIASCO THEATER

FIASCO THEATER is an ensemble that offers dynamic, joyful, actor-driven productions of plays and musicals. Fiasco's artists believe the performer, the text and the audience's imagination are the primary elements required to create great theatre. Past shows include *Merrily We Roll Along* (Roundabout Theatre Company), *Cymbeline* (Theatre for A New Audience/Barrow Street), *Into the Woods* (Roundabout, The Old Globe, McCarter Theatre Center), *Measure for Measure* (New Victory, Long Wharf Theatre), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Folger Theatre, TFANA), *The Imaginary Invalid* (The Old Globe) and *Twelfth Night* (Classic Stage Company). *Cymbeline* was presented Off-Broadway twice, for nearly 200 performances, and was honored with the 2012 Off-Broadway Alliance Award for best revival. *Into the Woods* garnered the 2015 Lucille Lortel Award for Best Revival. *Into the Woods* went on to play the Menier Chocolate Factory in London, and the 2016-17 national tour won the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Visiting Production and LA Drama Critics Circle Awards for Best Direction and Best Ensemble. Every year, Fiasco offers the Free Training Initiative—a three-week, conservatory-level classical acting intensive for professional actors, completely free of charge to students. Fiasco's work has been commissioned by The Old Globe, and they have been in residence with TFANA, Duke University, Marquette University and Louisiana State University. They are currently in residence with Roundabout and New York University-Gallatin. Their work has been developed at the Sundance Theatre Lab, the Orchard Project, SPACE at Ryder Farm and the Shakespeare Society, and they have led master classes at Brown University and NYU. Fiasco Theater receives generous support from Howard Gilman Foundation, SHS Foundation, Lucille Lortel Foundation, Actors' Equity Foundation, The Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, New York State Council on the Arts and The Shubert Organization.

GLOSSARY

Adultery – sexual relations between a married person and someone outside of that marriage

Anon – soon

Assay – to attempt

Bawd – a woman who runs a brothel

Beseech – ask urgently

Blasphemy – an offense to God and/or the Church

Censure – formal statement of disapproval

Chaste – abstinent from sexual intercourse OR morally pure

Constable – a low-ranking law official

Cuckold – a man whose wife cheats on him

Doubleness – double in strength and/or effect

Ere – before

Fornication – sexual intercourse

Fornicatress – a woman who commits adultery

Forswear – to lie under oath; commit perjury

House of resort – brothel

Ignominy – shame and humiliation

Lechery – great sexual desire

Prithee – please; ‘I pray thee’

Prolixious – superfluous in speech; verbose

Requital – compensation

Sanctimonious – falsely appearing morally superior to others

Sirrah – disrespectful term of address for a man or boy

Slander – a false statement damaging to someone’s reputation

Tyranny – extreme and cruel government power or rule

Unhappy – unlucky, unfortunate

Usurp – to take power from someone by force

Wench – a young woman of the working class



Constables served many purposes in Europe. Some made rounds as night watchmen, while others, like Elbow in *Measure for Measure*, functioned as police officers.

VIENNA: A CITY OF UNREST AND UPHEAVAL

Shakespeare sets *Measure for Measure* in 17th-century Vienna, a hotbed of religious and political turmoil. Vienna was part of the Holy Roman Empire under the absolute monarchy of the Habsburgs, who restored Vienna to Catholicism after a period of Protestantism during the Reformation. During this time, a group of Catholic missionaries called the Jesuits became an influential presence in the city. Staunch supporters of Pope Julius III, the Jesuits rejected any departure from Catholic doctrine. Due to their position as advisors and educators to several Habsburgs, the Jesuits had immense influence in the Empire's return to Catholicism.

The religious influence extends beyond the setting to the title of the play. Shakespeare took inspiration from a biblical passage from the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with that judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" (Matthew 7:1-2). The meaning of this passage has been debated throughout the history of Christianity. Some understood this edict to mean that no Christian should have authority over anyone else and that it is only God's right to judge both spiritually and legally. On the other hand, others believed Christians are to stay out of spiritual affairs but are welcome to weigh in on legal matters.

This question of who has the right to pass judgement on others is key in *Measure for Measure*. Angelo prepares to put Claudio to death for having sex outside of wedlock, despite his own interest in pursuing Claudio's sister, Isabella. Isabella, meanwhile, refuses to deviate from her faith, even to save her brother's life, and she condemns Angelo for his hypocrisy in not showing mercy to Claudio. Underlying this conflict is the city's

complex interplay of church and state; many of the legal standards of Vienna at the time were based in Catholic doctrine. In this case, how does one keep religious and legal codes separate at all?

Such a tumultuous religious environment seems an odd choice of setting for a comedy. While not exactly the magical romp of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure* still showcases some of Shakespeare's classic comedic tropes. Characters wear disguises, the antagonist is tricked into a false romance and bawdy jokes abound. These moments of levity provide a fitting counterpoint to the strict moral codes of Catholic Vienna.



War and strife plagued the time of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who reigned during the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation.



Shakespeare juxtaposes extremely serious scenes with absurd comedy. The scene depicted here, which features clowning and exaggerated features, directly follows a confrontation between Angelo and Isabella.

While *Measure for Measure* is sure to be a show of laughter and trickery, the audience will have the chance to interrogate these serious questions of judgement for themselves. In fact, audience members may find that the quandaries of 17th-century Vienna have much in common with 21st-century America. Today's polarizing political figures and public controversies allow the themes of the classic play to feel familiar. The comedic storytelling that makes these heavy topics a bit easier to swallow also provides raucous entertainment in any era.

-Rachel Bischoff

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SAINTS AND SINNERS

Imagine you're wandering down a city street, and as you stroll from one corner to the next, you're greeted by a line of doors. A door can tell you a lot about what's on the other side, giving you clues about whether you're passing an apartment complex or an office building, a store or a school. But of course, a door is also designed to keep what lies behind it a secret. It's a surprisingly complicated object. In Fiasco Theater's acclaimed production of *Measure for Measure*, the people of Vienna navigate a vibrant city full of doors that both let them in and shut them out. And as they're forced to rub elbows on Vienna's busy streets, the saints and sinners in the crowd clash in unexpectedly funny—and sometimes dangerous—ways, discovering that the distinctions between them aren't always so clear. One of William Shakespeare's most provocative plays, *Measure for Measure* explores why we struggle just to coexist, and whether even the simplest binaries, such as vice and virtue, are as straightforward as we think.

(Continued on next page)

OCT. 9 – 27, 2019



BROWN-FORMAN SERIES

As Shakespeare depicts it, Vienna isn't unlike his rowdy, cosmopolitan London, or our own cities today. Then and now, urban life hinges on power: who enforces the rules, and who has to obey them? The Duke of Vienna is the first to admit he's been lax when it comes to laws around morality and sex, and with little explanation, he steps aside temporarily and appoints straightlaced Lord Angelo to turn the city around in his absence. Right away, Angelo cracks down on Vienna's wicked ways, leaving everyone scrambling—including Mistress Overdone and her wisecracking associate, who try to fend off a constable's clumsy attempts to close her brothel. Angelo's harshness plays out more seriously with a young man named Claudio: in accordance with the law, he's sentenced to death for having sex out of wedlock. Claudio's only hope is that his sister Isabella, who's about to become a nun, can change Angelo's mind. But at first, Angelo refuses to budge, and all of Vienna finds itself facing what happens when justice leaves no room for mercy.

This focus on an entire community—from a jail to a convent and everywhere in between—is one of the reasons that Fiasco Theater was drawn to *Measure for Measure*. “When people who see the world differently are forced to engage, anything can happen,” says Fiasco co-artistic director Ben Steinfeld, who helms the company's production with one of his fellow co-artistic directors, Noah Brody. Fiasco's highly collaborative, ensemble-based ethos is well suited to a play that features multiple protagonists and perspectives. And as the company explored *Measure*, they realized that the play also offers intriguing possibilities for double-casting, so in their production, almost everyone has at least two roles—a feat for the actors that speaks to the play's themes too. “For us, it has to do with the double-sidedness that *Measure* is examining,” Steinfeld explains. “We try to structure the doubling such that everyone is playing someone from the supposedly more uptown, civilized world, and someone from the underbelly, the part of the culture that everyone keeps denying is there.” For example, one actor portrays both devout Isabella and bawdy Mistress Overdone.

“I always prefer questions to answers, and I think Shakespeare does too.”

— Ben Steinfeld,
co-director of *Measure for Measure*

Watching one performer skillfully embody such opposite characters suggests that a little bit of both of them exists in all of us. For Steinfeld, that's part of what *Measure for Measure* is about: “We're all trying to reconcile different parts of ourselves and different impulses we have—the desire to better ourselves and figure out how to be together, and at the same time, the more primal instincts and judgments that reside in us.” This is true even for Lord Angelo, whose rigid integrity breaks down as he becomes unable—or unwilling—to control the lust he suddenly feels for Isabella. He offers her an outrageous bargain: in exchange for sex, he'll spare Claudio's life. When she threatens to blow the whistle on him, Angelo argues that no one would believe her. Left with few options, how far will Isabella go to thwart Angelo and save her brother—and herself?

Given *Measure for Measure*'s high-stakes twists and turns, Steinfeld recalls that Fiasco company members were struck by the sense of humor that's central to the play as well. “Certainly it has a lot of politics in it and a lot of darkness,” he observes, “but it's also a comedy. It's absurd. And it's full of revelation and surprise.” Embracing that complexity is at the heart of Fiasco's approach to *Measure for Measure*. The result is an actor-driven production that digs into Shakespeare's rich language and multifaceted characters, and takes the audience along for the ride. “We care about the audience deeply,” says Steinfeld. “It's about giving them an experience that they can't have anywhere else.” It's also about making space to ask tough questions. “I always prefer questions to answers,” Steinfeld reflects, “and I think Shakespeare does too.” When a city's legal system is tested by both the people who run it and the people it's supposed to keep in line, can order be restored? What does it mean to be good, and what does justice look like for the citizens of Vienna—and for us?

—Jessica Reese

WRITING PORTFOLIO

NARRATIVE: CCRA.W.3

In *Measure for Measure*, Isabella is torn between helping someone she loves and standing up for herself and her beliefs. Create a character who is in a similar crisis and write a journal entry from his or her perspective. Why is this person faced with such a difficult decision? What will happen if the person does not stay true to his or her beliefs? What will happen if the person doesn't help his or her loved one? Explore!

INFORMATIVE: CCRA.W.2

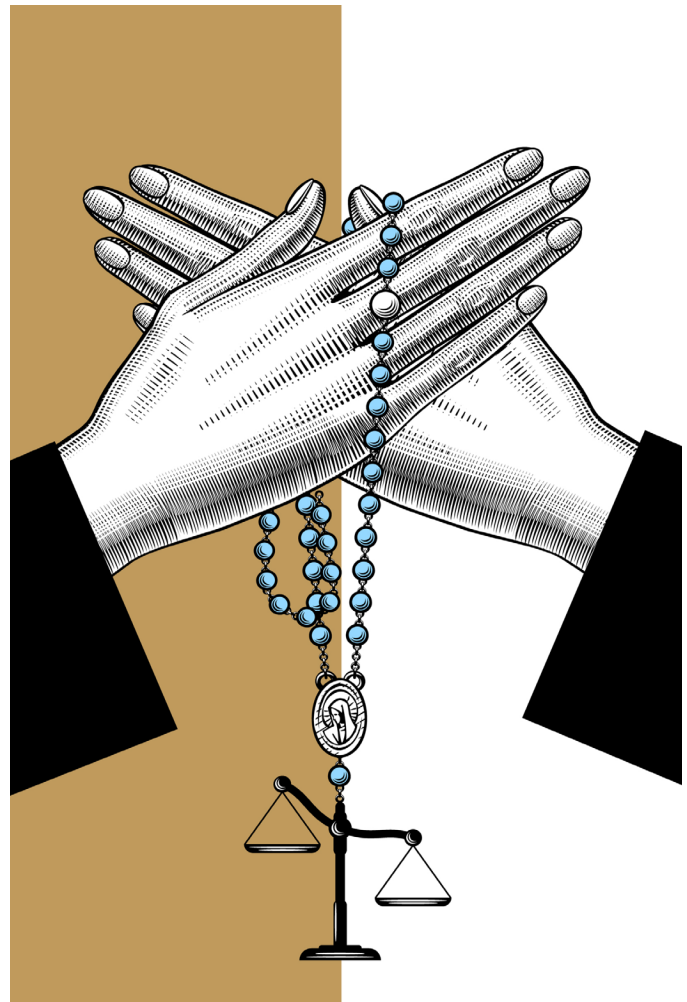
Write a review of the performance of *Measure for Measure* that you saw at Actors Theatre of Louisville. What parts of the play (the actors' performances, the set, props, costumes, lighting design, music, etc.) were your favorites and why? How effective were these elements in telling the story? Back up your claims with evidence and details from your experience of watching the performance. Then, make a copy and send it to the Learning & Creative Engagement department at:

Actors Theatre of Louisville
c/o Abigail Miskowiec
316 West Main Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

We will share your thoughts with the creative team.

ARGUMENTATIVE: CCRA.W.1

Spoiler alert! Angelo will spare Claudio's life if Isabella will agree to have sex with him. However, Isabella doesn't want to sleep with Angelo, and it's not only against her religious beliefs to have sex out of wedlock, but also illegal for her to do so. To get out of this situation, Isabella asks another woman, Mariana, to pretend she is Isabella and have sex with Angelo instead. Is it okay for Isabella to ask Mariana to do this? Is it in line with Isabella's stated morals to do so, or is it an example of "foul redemption"? Why or why not?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. *Measure for Measure* focuses on the strict laws and legal punishments of the Catholic city of Vienna in the early 1600s. How do you think a society's laws reflect its values? Is there an example of a law in your society that relates to a larger value or belief system?
2. William Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure* in the early 1600s, but it continues to be produced today. Why do you think we continue to tell stories that were written for an audience hundreds of years ago? Thinking of other classical texts you have read or seen, are these stories still relevant or are they outdated in any way? Explain.

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. *Measure for Measure* asks us to explore our moral compasses: is it okay to commit a crime, compromise your beliefs, or lie to someone else in order to help someone you love? What characters in the play did something wrong in order to do something good? Do you agree with their actions? Why or why not?
2. *Measure for Measure* features a government figure who punishes others harshly, but seems to be himself above the law. Did you find Angelo's strict enforcement of laws fair? Where in other stories or in real life do you see similar abuses of power?