

Rebecca Davis
Arts Scholar 4th Year Award Application
Mentor: Tovah Close

**Performing Shakespeare:
Attending Shakespeare & Company's Summer Shakespeare Intensive for Actors**

I am requesting a \$3,000 Miller Arts award to help cover my tuition for the 2023 Summer Shakespeare Intensive for Actors through Shakespeare & Company (May 29-June 26). The tuition will pay for my housing in Lennox, MA and for four weeks of classes.

This program is developed for undergraduate theater students, recent graduates, and early career actors. The Intensive offers six days of classes a week during which students work on a variety of skills in both performance and text work each day from 9am to 9pm. Students can attain typical voice and movement training in addition to more specialized classes in skills such as stage combat and clowning. The program also works to develop a better understanding of the Elizabethan era in England in its students and establish actor-audience relationships that are more typical of Elizabethan style performances.

My mentor for this project is Tovah Close, a lecturer in the UVa drama department. Along with the rest of her impressive teaching resume and educational background in theater, she has taught for the MFA program in Shakespeare and Performance at Mary Baldwin University, making her the perfect mentor for this project. Because of her experience in Shakespearean performance she was able to recommend this program to me and offer further guidance for my proposal such as monologue selection for my portfolio examples. She has also been very useful in my understanding of the requirements for the Miller Arts awards and has offered advice every step of the way in the process of writing my proposal and creating my budget and timeline.

My hope is that this program will provide a substantial supplement to my theater education at the University of Virginia which does not currently offer classes specifically for classical acting techniques. While UVa drama is increasingly offering more specialized performance courses, I want to obtain more outside help on movement and voice especially since they are areas that would certainly take me longer than a semester to master. While I value the theatrical education I am receiving at the university, my education has mainly been focused on contemporary acting. While contemporary skills can certainly be applied to classical productions, my intense passion and preference for classical theater has led me to pursue more specialized training.

If I were to enter a career in theater, I would initially seek a jobs in Shakespearean theatre companies or others companies that focus on classical theater. This decision is partially because, quite simply, I enjoy watching and performing in classical plays more. However, the longer story is that I truly believe Shakespearean theatre has its place in our modern world, and I think that everyone, regardless of education, status, or background, should be able to access these great dramatic works if they have the desire. I do not believe in forcing his works on others, since it is in high school that most people learn to read, and quickly resent, Shakespeare. I think the cure to resentment is a combination of accessibility and optionality. If Shakespeare's plays were to be removed from the pedestal onto which they have been placed, people would still be interested in these works because they can survive on their own merits. With my education and eventual career, I hope to nurture this interest in Shakespeare that naturally occurs in people of all ages and backgrounds, and work to help them access all they wish to access. If someone does not possess an interest in classical theater, I say, why push it? Shakespeare should not be a weapon of Western superiority, nor should it be revered due to fame alone. I have observed how a perfect

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combination of directors, actors, and designers can stage a Shakespearean production with all its original language and essentially teach its audience to understand everything. This capability of artists and their collaboration with the long-dead playwright is what originally made me fall in love with theater itself and see it as a tool of both entertainment and education. This slight tangent is meant to explain the passion I have for Shakespeare, and why classical theater is an integral part of everything I do as an artist. The reasons for my passion are the very same reasons why I chose Shakespeare & Company's program for I see my own passions and goals reflected in their mission of teaching theater professions across the globe.

I was also very intentional about choosing a program in the United States, and my reasoning was not simply budgetary. I believe that Shakespeare has a home in the United States, a home that does not look exactly like its home in other countries. Every time Shakespeare is performed, reperformed, abridged, adapted, or translated a new play is born, and the centuries-long story continues. I think America plays a part of that story; as an intense critic of my own country, but a lover of its people, I think America is a poignant stage to reinvent history and a valuable agent in the end of so-called "Bardolatry." Shakespeare & Company was developed in collaboration between British and American theater professionals to create a Shakespearean education that looks to the past, the homeland of the plays, but also looks to the future, abroad from where Shakespeare himself ever traveled.

In my interview for the program, I discovered the company has a creative philosophy very similar to my own, that an artist must live curiously. It is curiosity that keeps Shakespeare alive, for people are not only curious about his writing, but also about how the plays were originally staged, how they have been staged in the centuries between then and now, and how they have yet to be staged. It is curiosity turned inwards that made me interested in acting in particular; I was told the program encourages a curiosity of self in their actors, rather than a curiosity in the external character that they may strain to portray. The agreement between my own philosophy and theirs is why I believe I was admitted into the program, and why I wish to be able to enroll.

In summary, my intention with the project is to further my understanding of Shakespeare and performance for my educational and professional pursuits in the arts. I plan to apply what I learn at the intensive in the remainder of my education at UVa and my involvement in extracurricular theater projects. I also hope to use my experience in the intensive as an opportunity to network, form relationships with fellow actors, and acquire more marketable skills in the theatrical field. Then, finally, with my outcome report in April of my final year at UVa, I hope to show future scholars that they can pursue something similar.

Intensive Webpage:

<https://www.shakespeare.org/actor-training/2023-summer-shakespeare-intensive>

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Timeline

Fall/Winter 2022

- 2023 Summer Shakespeare Intensive Program Application completed and submitted in November.

Winter

- Interviewed for the intensive program on February 10, 2023
- Admission into the 2023 Summer Shakespeare Intensive Program on February 11, 2023
- Worked closely with my mentor Tovah Close to develop my goals for the project and write my letter of intent for the arts award.

Spring 2023

- Developing my proposal and budget for the project with advice from my mentor, other drama professors, and previous arts awards recipients
- Notification of funding early May 2023
- Funding distributed early June 2023

Summer 2023

- My Arrival in Lennox, MA on Sunday, May 28, 2023, and night in hotel (self-funded)
- 2023 Summer Shakespeare Intensive begins on Monday, May 29, 2023 (arrival)
- 2023 Summer Shakespeare Intensive ends Monday, June 26, 2023 (departure)

Fall 2023-Spring 2024

- Work on outcome report and presentation for the end of April to present to my fellow scholars.
 - My report may include how my education in the intensive impacts my experience in curricular and extracurricular performances in the Fall 23 and Spring 24 semesters
- Present Outcome Report end of April.

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Budget

Item	Estimated Cost	Details/Notes
Shakespeare and Company 2023 Acting Intensive		
Application Fee	\$25	
Tuition	\$5,500	4 weeks of classes, housing, daily travel to campus, and breakfasts
Subtotal	\$5,525	
Secondary Costs		
Food	\$400	Groceries and dining out
Travel	\$125	Gas for drive to Lennox, Massachusetts and back home to Virginia
Hotel	\$60	Staying in a hotel my first night there before my provided housing begins
Subtotal	\$585	
Total	\$6,110	

Item	Estimated Funding	Details/Notes
Miller Arts Award	\$3,000	Applying in my 3rd year, Outcome in my 4th year Distributed June 2023
Personal Contribution	\$3,110	
Total	\$6,110	