

Twelfth Night Mainstage Performance Outcome Report

After the pandemic shut down any prospects of a spring production of *Twelfth Night*, which I began directing in January 2020, I applied for the Arts Award with the objective “to have a full weekend of a mainstage production (i.e. not in a lecture hall) of *Twelfth Night* so that we can reach a larger audience and so that we can retain the technical work that has already been put into this production.” During the time of this application, I assumed UVA would be back to normal in the fall; unfortunately, that was not the case. With the help of my faculty mentor, Dave Dalton, I tweaked my proposal and budget to adapt *Twelfth Night* as a four-episode podcast, retitled *Twelfth Night: The Radio Show!* With this change, I was able to meet the goals of at least a weekend-long production and not holding it in a lecture hall because it is available online indefinitely. One of my main goals for the production was to reach a wider audience, and because of the nature of the podcast, we have had 270 listens from around the country (as of March 19, 2021), a breadth of audience we wouldn’t have been able to reach had the production been live in Charlottesville. Unfortunately, we could not retain most of the technical work that we had worked on last semester because we switched from a predominantly visual medium to a strictly auditory medium, but with the loss of the visual aspects of tech, I gained a lot of technical experience in audio, something I would not have been able to do had the production been a normal mainstage show.

My faculty mentor was Dave Dalton, the directing professor in the Drama Department. I took his Directing I class in the fall of 2019, and he is the professor that encouraged me to apply for the Arts Award. Because this was my first full-length directing project, I frequently turned to Dave for advice on how to approach conflicts with actors, how to give effective notes, and how to creatively problem solve. There were multiple times where, because of my inexperience, I felt overwhelmed and felt like couldn’t move forward, but Dave presented me with my options and guided me toward the solutions that made the project possible. For example, when the pandemic shut down the possibility of a fall mainstage production, Dave encouraged me to use part of my budget for professional microphones, which dramatically improved the quality of the project. I’m so grateful to have had him as my mentor, and without his help, I would not have had the skills nor the confidence to take this project on.

To listen to the final version of *Twelfth Night: The Radio Show!*, visit:
<http://www.shakespeareonthelawn.org/2020-twelfth-night-the-radio-show/>

Project Timeline

Early Fall: Recast the roles of Fabian, Sebastian, and First Officer and cast the role of Narrator. Listened to old radio shows and researched the basics of audio recording.

During the auditions, I learned how to give effective audio acting notes, when previously I had been focusing on the more visual aspects of the play. One of the most helpful structures for notes that I found was “It sounds to me like...” or “It’s coming across as...” because even though actors may be truly feeling and reflecting the emotions of the characters, when there’s only audio, those emotions read differently for an audience. For example, someone’s laughter might sound like crying.

Sept. 21-28: Introduced the new cast members (except the Narrator) to their new scenes through tablework and began to rework the more difficult monologues and soliloquies with old cast members.

This felt more similar to my earlier work in theatre directing because we were focusing more on breaking down the events, objectives, and tactics in the play, which didn’t change very much despite the change in medium. I continued to give sound-based feedback, however, being sure to assure the actors that they were not performing the role incorrectly, we just needed to work together adapt to the audio format. Many actors’ voicework improved over the course of these rehearsals, with one of my actors even developing a new voice that she did not use in the live rehearsals in order to differentiate her voice from the other characters.

Sept. 28-Oct. 5: Rehearsed every scene to remind the cast of the work we had already done and to incorporate the new cast members. Wrote, revised, and edited narrations. Ordered and learned to use the mics.

During this part of the process, as we were continuing rehearsals, I watched many instructional videos on audio recording and editing, met with Drama professor Michael Rasbury for a crash course on audio recording, and developed a list of the elements of 1950s radio sitcoms that I wanted to have in the radio show (e.g. jazzy theme music, enthusiastic narration, and sound effects). I realized during this part of the process that I needed to know how to use these mics better than any cast member because I was going to be the one people turned to with technical difficulties, so I spent a few days experimenting with the mic’s settings and making both a video and PDF guide for my actors so that they had all of the mic information in one place.

Oct. 6-17: Recorded every scene, usually doing two takes, but sometimes doing as many as five in order to get timing and tone right.

If I had done this project again, I would not have recorded two takes unnecessarily (i.e. if the actors did not mess up in the first take). These actors had been trained to perform once without any “redos,” so many of their first takes would have been perfectly fine to use in the final product. Because I recorded multiple takes, I spent a lot of editing time

weeding through hours of tape to find which takes I wanted to use, and many of the takes ended up being very similar.

Oct. 27-Nov. 7: Rerecorded scenes as needed.

Oct. 19-Nov. 23: Edited the podcast.

This part of the process was the most difficult, as it was the part of the process I was the most unfamiliar with. By the end of my 100 hours of editing, however, I was proficient in Logic Pro X, the industry standard software for audio editing. I'm now very familiar with not only the shortcuts in the app but also the tips and tricks to reduce background noise and fix the levels of audio recordings.

Nov. 12-Dec. 8: Promoted the podcast through Instagram posts, postcards, stickers with QR codes, and t-shirts.

With help from Shakespeare on the Lawn's publicity team, we developed a set of materials with QR codes on them that people could easily scan to go directly to the podcast's page on the SotL website. Everyone in the cast and crew received 10 postcards, at least one sticker, and a show t-shirt. I credit this publicity effort for our broad audience.

Nov. 24: Released the podcast.

Final Budget

Sweetwater: AudioTechnica 2005 USB Microphones (14 total)	\$1,307.66
Best Buy: Seagate Expansion Portable Drive 4TB	\$97.49
Apple: Logic Pro X	\$199.99
Apple: Final Draft 11	\$199.99
Apple: Final Cut (Student Version)	\$199.99
Theme Music Recording and Editing	\$309.00
Vistaprint: QR Code Postcards	\$103.53
Custom Ink: Cast & Crew T-shirts	\$308.40
Sticker Mule: QR Code Stickers	\$75.78
USPS: Mailing Mics and Publicity Materials to Cast & Crew	\$242.39
TOTAL	\$3,044.33*

*remaining \$44.33 paid using my own money, not the Arts Award