

# The Merry Wives of Windsor at the Folger Shakespeare Library: A Comprehensive Guide



Welcome to the enchanting world of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, one of William Shakespeare's most beloved comedies. At the renowned Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., you can immerse yourself in the

play's rich history, captivating characters, and timeless themes. This comprehensive guide will provide you with an in-depth look at the Folger's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, offering insights into its staging, performances, and the unique experience it offers to theatergoers.



## The Merry Wives of Windsor (Folger Shakespeare Library) by Paul Werstine

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
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### Historical Context

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* is believed to have been written around 1597, during a period of great prosperity and optimism in England. The play is set in the town of Windsor, just outside of London, and revolves around the misadventures of the portly knight, Sir John Falstaff. Falstaff's attempts to woo two wealthy married women, Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, lead to a series of hilarious misunderstandings and slapstick comedy.

The play is thought to have been commissioned by Queen Elizabeth I, who was said to be a great admirer of Falstaff. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is one of Shakespeare's few plays that is set in contemporary England, and it provides a fascinating glimpse into the social customs and everyday life of the Elizabethan era.

## **The Folger Production**

The Folger Shakespeare Library is home to one of the world's largest collections of Shakespeare's works, including the First Folio, the first collected edition of his plays. The Folger also produces acclaimed productions of Shakespeare's plays, using the original text and staging techniques that would have been familiar to Elizabethan audiences.

The Folger's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a vibrant and energetic affair, capturing the play's humor and wit. The cast is led by a charismatic Falstaff, played by actor Raphael Nash Thompson.

Thompson's Falstaff is a roguish and lovable figure, whose larger-than-life personality dominates the stage.

The rest of the cast is equally strong, with standout performances from Mary Wiseman as Mistress Page and Kate Burton as Mistress Ford. The supporting cast, including a chorus of townspeople and servants, provides excellent comic support.

## **The Staging**

The Folger's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is staged in a traditional Elizabethan style, with minimal sets and props. The focus is on the language and the performances, and the audience is transported back to the Globe Theatre in London.

The set is simple and elegant, with a few key pieces of furniture and a backdrop that evokes the town of Windsor. The costumes are authentic to the period, and help to create the illusion of a bygone era.

## **The Themes**

The Merry Wives of Windsor is a comedy of mistaken identities, romantic entanglements, and social satire. The play explores the themes of love, marriage, and the battle between the sexes.

Falstaff is a central figure in the play, and his character represents the forces of chaos and disorder. His attempts to woo Mistress Page and Mistress Ford are doomed to failure, as the women are too clever and resourceful for him. The play ultimately celebrates the power of women and the folly of men who underestimate them.

### **The Audience Experience**

Attending a production of The Merry Wives of Windsor at the Folger Shakespeare Library is an unforgettable experience. The theater is intimate and atmospheric, and the audience is close to the action on stage. The performances are lively and engaging, and the laughter is infectious.

The Folger also offers a variety of educational programs and resources to enhance your experience of the play. You can take a guided tour of the theater, attend a lecture on Shakespeare's comedy, or participate in a workshop on Elizabethan theater.

The Merry Wives of Windsor is a timeless comedy that continues to delight audiences today. The Folger Shakespeare Library's production of the play is a superb example of how Shakespeare's works can be brought to life in a vibrant and engaging way. Whether you are a seasoned Shakespeare enthusiast or a newcomer to his plays, you are sure to enjoy this delightful production.

### **Additional Resources**

\* The Folger Shakespeare Library: <https://www.folger.edu/> \* The Merry Wives of Windsor: <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/merry-wives-windsor> \* Raphael Nash Thompson: <https://www.folger.edu/about/staff-directory/raphael-nash-thompson> \* Mary Wiseman: <https://www.folger.edu/about/staff-directory/mary-wiseman> \* Kate Burton: <https://www.folger.edu/about/staff-directory/kate-burton>



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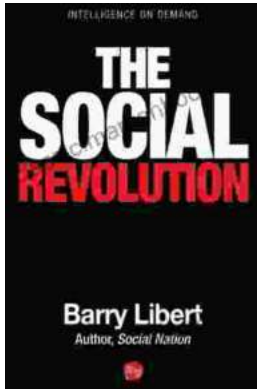
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