

This Friday, March 24, we had the chance to interview Micaela Kluver, a doctoral student at the Shakespeare Institute. She shared with us her passion for the Institute and how she came to teach abroad.



Micaela Kluver and “the mechanicals” 22 mars 2024, la Roche-sur-Yon
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Can you tell us about your experience with theater? At what age did you start, and can you make a living out of it ?

I started theater when I was 12 years old in middle school. I did a school production. It was “Halloween Twists” a fairy tale so I played Boubala who was a Cinderella character but she was a pretty witch so her ugly witch sisters teased her all the time and treated her very poorly. That was a weird show but that was fun and then I kept doing musicals and Shakespeare in high school and then I kept doing it in college and decided after 2 years that I was going to change to be a drama major so I got my undergraduate degree in theater and the rest is history. I do some semi-professional theater, not big stage, more local theater. I prefer to teach and to work with theater companies in different ways than to be on stage although it is fun to perform.

How did you come to work at ices?

You were my first group, 2 years ago. Stewart Ross contacted my school, the Shakespeare Institute, Abigail, one of our professors and there are friends so Stewart contacted Abigail and said we need two people to come and teach masterclasses and I was selected and then I

taught you all in your first year. I came back again last year and Stewart asked if I'd like to take over the program and I accepted.

What's a typical day in your job/life ?

Right now I'm a PHD student so my life consists of getting up, having a large cup of coffee, sitting down on my computer, reading a chapter that I have written and editing that, most of the day and I have another job in the evening, I work at a restaurant for a few hours. Then I go home and sleep and do the same thing all over again.

What do you like most about Shakespeare's world, what makes you want to teach it to students?

You know I'm really interested in how Shakespeare uses stories from the past and he made them kinda contemporary for people in his time. So I like the way that he rewrites stories and uses other people's stories and kinda makes it more contemporary and interesting and understandable, relatable. So what I do with theater is I actually created my own course in England where I teach students how to rewrite Shakespeare so I teach them about how Shakespeare took old stories and changed them and they take his stories and they change them into their own.

What makes him special, what makes him unique compared to other playwrights ?

I think his popularity. Honestly. I think there are a lot of really brilliant playwrights out there, and a lot of playwrights who don't really know about his time. He was a huge commercial success. And also because of the way they put his collection together, it was really like "right time, right place", because, when he died, all of his friends collected his writings and then put it into a big book, which wasn't very common, they had just created the printing press. So it was a new technology, new things that they could do. So I think it was just the amount of people that became fans of him, even people with whom he had bad relationships said how great he was. And then it just kind of remained, for 400 years, all over the world. It's really cool. I think that's why he's so popular. I think that really has a lot to do with it.

What's your favorite Shakespeare play, and why ?

My favorite play is Winter's Tale because I like the romances, I like stories that are not all comedy not all tragedy, it can be sad at times and very happy and joyful and at the end there's usually a romance, like everybody comes back together and it resolves itself, in a very human way, it's not fantastical or really tragic. And I also like the fact that in the middle of the play, you have this big bohemian, like spring festival and it's just joyous and wonderful. Yeah. It's a great play.

Which one do you like least ?

My least favorite is Hamlet (reading it), it's too long. And Hamlet is just very whiny, he's just a big baby.

If you had to play one of the characters in the play (MSND), who would it be?

I think, now.. Titania. I would love to play Titania. I already played Peaseblossom when I was in college, but yeah that would be a fun part. When I was younger I wanted to play Helena.

How do the French understand Shakespeare? Is it different from the English?

No. Not when I teach. I think all students have the same knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for Shakespeare, no matter where you are. But I definitely think the two countries treat Shakespeare differently. I have actually done some research on French Shakespeare, like Sarah Bernhardt and her Hamlet. France used to cut out so much of Shakespeare because it wasn't allowed on stage, and she put it all back in and she got into a lot of trouble for it. As for England, he (Shakespeare) IS Britain, he IS England you know. It's part of their personality, so yeah, I think every other country treats him very differently.

Do you know if English students study Molière in England?

Not as children, not in high school or primary or secondary, they might, around 16-18 but rare. In the United States I studied Molière in college and we performed Tartuffe. I played the mom. I've seen productions of Molière in England but contemporary versions of it, using different religions, using different backgrounds. because I think similarly like Shakespeare, it is something malleable, changeable, you can make it fit any identity and background and that is why it is so interesting about plays that were written then.

Is it not exhausting to do your day and then work at the restaurant, would you think to stay like this for a couple years and then completely change and do one job?

I have one more year of PHD and then I'm done with school forever. Then, I'll be Doctor Kluver and I'll be able to apply for university roles and to different jobs so, crossing fingers that I'll get to but everything is very expensive, so I might still need to do two jobs for a while, that is just reality but hoping I can find a really good position that will support me.

Would you want to stay in England or move to America?

No I will stay in England, I want to stay here on the side of the ocean and perhaps go and teach Shakespeare in different countries. Because I keep doing ICES, in the spring at least. So hopefully I will stay and get to work with people, and students from all over the place which is kind of my dream.

Do you have a dream country to teach Shakespeare?

A good friend of mine just started a women's Shakespeare's club or organization in Pakistan which I have been looking at, and see if I could go and do a project with them cause I think that it will be interesting. I'm just very curious about different parts of the world, how they react to Shakespeare, especially people around your age or younger.