The "Dear Will" Letters
A Lively Romantic Comedy
By Doll Piccotto & William Shakespeare

April 23 - 25, 2021

"The course of true love never did run smooth."
Directors’ Note

During this pandemic, providing our audiences with an experience that will give them a similar joy to being at the park, as well as inspire our artists, has been a challenge to say the least. BUT where there is a WILL, there is a way. With a uniquely talented team that possesses a whole lot of heart, we have been able to tackle each challenge that comes our way...

**Challenge:** We miss seeing the chemistry of actors being in the same space, but cannot have them interact in person due to safety regulations.

**Solution:** Cast actual couples so we can see that beautiful chemistry we all miss so much!

**Challenge:** While Zoom shows are a great way to connect with our audience amidst the pandemic, we miss the quality of production that an in-person show brings.

**Solution:** Have an amazing filmmaker capture scenes on location to bring our audience a high-quality production! It just so happens that SVS has a lifelong friend in award-winning filmmaker Christian Pizzirani, who happily accepted the challenge of turning SVS cinematic, bringing the standard of theatrical filming to a new high.

**Challenge:** But we still want the live experience...

**Solution:** Well... it just so happens that this script is compartmentalized into monologues and scenes. We can make Zoom work FOR us, rather than AGAINST us. Our characters are writing letters live in the present seeking help from “Dear Will” and in their mind’s eye, they are living out their Shakespearean fantasy in the woods, as we are living out our dream of creating a theatrical experience in our beloved Sanborn Park.

To all our amazing actors, technicians, artists and angels who helped SVS overcome all obstacles in making this show a uniquely rewarding one—thank you.

You gave your time, your talent, your blood, sweat and tears. You came out to film in a forest, you trekked up a HUGE hill after getting off work. You stood behind a camera for 10 hours. You held up a boom mike until your arms shook. You created characters, you memorized lines, you pulled costumes, you brought us TACO BELL, you zoomed in from Canada, you rehearsed, marketed, posted, recorded, mended ruffs, picked up costumes, always strove to be your best, and brought a story to life in a time of trial.

At the end of the show, we always applaud, but sometimes applause isn’t enough to express the level of the gratitude we have for all of you. It has been a joyful journey...a long and challenging journey, but a joyful one.

Love,

Team Angiecrantz and Dollenstern,
The Team with the Dream

Silicon Valley Shakespeare invigorates the classics through innovative, relevant theatrical experiences that illuminate and inspire modern audiences.
Cast of Characters

William Shakespeare ........................................... Tom Gough
Benedick .......................................................... James Eric Lucas
Beatrice ............................................................. Doll Piccotto
Petruchio ........................................................... Aaron Weisberg
Kate ..................................................................... Cindy Weisberg
Baptista ............................................................... Kyle Smith
Malvolio .............................................................. Drew Benjamin Jones
Olivia ...................................................................... Melissa Jones
Maria ................................................................. Valerie Valenzuela
Sir Toby ............................................................... Ronnie Misra
Silvius ................................................................. Jeremy Ryan
Phebe .................................................................... Tonya Ryan
Rosalind ............................................................... Laura Domingo
Cleopatra ............................................................ Stephanie Whigham
Portia ................................................................. Annalisa Tkacheff

Production Staff

Co-Director & Costumes ................................. Angie Higgins
Co-Director & Costumes ................................. Doll Piccotto
Director of Photography/Editor ............ Christian Pizzirani
Rehearsal Stage Manager ................. Alexandra Maisonneuve Teixeira
Production Stage Manager ......................... Ellie Schwartz
Production Manager ................................. Tonya Mara

Scenes

SCENE 1
Benedick’s letter
Scene from Much Ado About Nothing

SCENE 2
Petruchio’s letter
Scene from The Taming of the Shrew

SCENE 3
Malvolio’s letter
Scene from Twelfth Night

SCENE 4
Silvius’s letter
Scene from As You Like It

SCENE 5
The final letter

The “Dear Will” Letters runs approximately 60 minutes, no intermission.

Join us after the show for a birthday toast to the Bard and a post-show Q&A with the cast and creative team.
Who's Who?

**Laura Domingo (Rosalind)** is so happy to be working on another SVS virtual show! She was most recently seen as Miss Bingley in SVS’s online production of *Pride and Prejudice*. Other previous roles include Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Plethos Productions); Phoebe in *As You Like It* (Silicon Valley Shakespeare); Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Actors Ensemble of Berkeley); Elizabeth Darcy in *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* (City Lights Theater Company); and Maria in *Lend Me a Tenor* (Ross Valley Players, SFBATCC Award). She also recently joined as SVS’s Marketing Director. Catch her next as Marie Antoinette in South Bay Musical Theatre’s virtual production of *The Revolutionists*.

**Tom Gough (William Shakespeare)** most recently worked for SVS in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Dogberry) and hopes to again in *Measure for Measure* (2022). A graduate of UC-Davis and Santa Clara University, Tom currently teaches Theatre Arts at Foothill College and still occasionally performs with ComedySportz-San Jose, of which, he is a founding member. Tom also served as City Lights Theater Company’s Artistic Director from 2001-2004. Tom has acted in and/or directed over 150 productions throughout Northern California. Some recent and favorite roles include *Sweat* (Stan), *Ideation* (Ted), *The Elephant Man* (Ross/Bishop), *On the Verge* (Man), *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (George), *The Voice of the Prairie* (Leon, etc), *Stones in His Pockets* (Charlie, etc).

**Angie Higgins (Director)** has been directing and acting with Silicon Valley Shakespeare since 2006 and serving as the Artistic Director of the company since 2014. Most recently, she directed the TBA recommended production of *The White Snake* at SVS. Other favorite directing credits include: *Hamlet* (SVS: all-female production), *Art* (Northside Theatre Company), *I Hate Hamlet* (Broadway West), *The Woman in Black* (NTC), *The Comedy of Errors* (SVS: all-female production), and *The Taming of the Shrew* (SVS). When not directing, Angie can be found utilizing her MA in Theatre Arts Education teaching Theatre and Dance, consuming fruity Starbucks beverages, and spending time with her favorite gentlemen and loves of her life, Tom & Charlie. A huge thank you to the extraordinary Christian Pizzirani for making this dream of SVS turning cinematic come to life AND to all of you for supporting virtual theatre! www.angiehiggins.com

**Drew Benjamin Jones (he/him) (Malvolio)** is thrilled to portray one of his favorite Shakespeare characters. Previous shows include *Pride and Prejudice* (Bingley), *Macbeth* (Witch 3, TBA Finalist), *The Tempest* (Caliban), *Taming of the Shrew* (Tranio) with SVS, *Shakespeare in Love* and One Man, Two Guvnors (Palo Alto Players), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (Los Altos Stage), *Truce: A Christmas Wish from the Great War* (City Lights), *Sojourn* (Pear Theatre), and several roles in ShakesBEERience (Buck Hill Productions/SVS).

**Melissa Jones (she/her) (Olivia)** is thrilled to return to SVS and Sanborn Park for her 15th season! Previous SVS credits include *The White Snake* (White Snake), *Hamlet* (Gertrude), and *The Comedy of Errors* (Dromio of Syracuse, TBA Finalist). Credits elsewhere include *Curious Incident…* (Judy) and *Sojourn* (Marta) at The Pear; *The Revolutionists* (Charlotte Corday) at Dragon Productions; *Tigers Be Still* (Sherry) at City Lights; and *How to Succeed…* (Miss Jones) and *Flower Drum Song* (Helen Chao) at WVLO. During the day, she works as SVS’s Development and Education Director, while at night, she moonlights as a hair/makeup designer (Pixar, Disney Channel UK, Opera San Jose, West Bay Opera, and others). Coming up in May, Melissa can be seen in *Love, Loss and What I Wore* at Montalvo Arts Center, and in June, as Abby in *The Mercy Seat* at Los Altos Stage Company.

**James Eric Lucas (Benedick)** is excited to be a part of this production with his SVS family! Previous credits include Macduff in *Macbeth* (SVS), Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (City Lights) and Orgon in *Tartuffe* (SVS).

**Tonya Mara (Phebe)** is glad to be back on the Sanborn stage, even if just for a quick filming moment. She’s been a part of SVS’s Sanborn productions for years as an actress, stage manager, assistant director, and production manager, so it definitely feels like a home away from home. She’s super thrilled to be out of the apartment for 5 minutes and hopes everyone is staying safe, masked, and sanitized.
Ronnie Misra *(Sir Toby)* is thrilled to take part in his first production with Silicon Valley Shakespeare. He thanks Angie and Doll for the opportunity to be part of this hilarious show. Some of his favorite recent shows include *DMV Tyrant* (James Agnes) with SVCT, *Oslo* (Hassan Asfour) with LASC, and *The Foreigner* (Charlie) with PCT. He can’t wait for the day when in-person theatre is safe again. Until then, he’s grateful for the innovative ways that theatre companies have found to let actors continue to perform their craft.

Doll Piccotto *(Writer/Co-Director/Beatrice)* has been with Silicon Valley Shakespeare since its inception and has worn many hats—actor, director and playwright, and in this case—more than one! It’s wonderful to see this piece take form in a new age, in a new medium, with a new audience. Thank you to everyone who made this possible, especially my Angiecranz ... keep dreaming big! You’re making things happen!

Christian Pizzirani *(Director of Photography/Editor)* is super, incredibly, excitedly, and justifiably thrilled to work alongside SVS for this project! While you’ve seen him on the SVS stage as Simple in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Silvius in *As You Like It*, Christian’s also an independent filmmaker. (check out his work at christianpizzirani.com). He’s a three-time local winner of the 48 Hour Film Project, a global short film competition, and is passionate about telling stories that entertain. Having made movies since he was a kid with a Hi8 camera, Christian often wears many hats such as director, cinematographer, and editor. He’s thankful to SVS for this opportunity, and to his wife Evelyn for her support, love, and Oreo-stuffed brownies.

Jeremy Ryan *(Silvius)* is thrilled to return to Silicon Valley Shakespeare after appearing here as Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* in 2013. Other credits include Lorenzo (*The Merchant of Venice*), Mr. Darcy (*Ms. Bennett & The Wickhams*), Terry (*Handle With Care*), and Richard (*Making God Laugh*) at City Lights Theater Company. Elsewhere, Jeremy has appeared as Sam Phillips in *Million Dollar Quartet* (PAP), Henry Wriothesley in *The Beard Of Avon* (The Pear) and Chevalier Danceny in *Dangerous Liaisons* (The Dragon). Jeremy is a graduate of the Foothill Theatre Conservatory & a company member at Play On Words San Jose.

Ellie Schwartz *(Production Stage Manager)* is ecstatic to return to Silicon Valley Shakespeare after interning on all three shows in the summer of 2019. She has previously stage managed *The Diary of Anne Frank, Intimate Apparel,* and *Roe* at Foothill Theatre Arts; assistant stage managed *Sweat, Hedda Gabler, Spending the End of the World on OkCupid,* and *Sojourn* for the Pear Theatre; and worked both onstage and off on numerous other productions all around the Bay Area. She is currently a theatre student at Foothill College and, when not in class, she spends her time drinking coffee, watching bad horror movies, and bothering her cats.

Kyle Smith *(Baptista)* is rather chuffed to be appearing in this delightfully inventive production and also to be reunited (at a safe social distance) with Cindy and Aaron, last seen altogether in *An Ideal Husband* at the Pear Theatre. Kyle is also pleased to add another SVS production to his resume, which so far includes *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Sir Hugh Evans) and three 48 Hour Play Festivals (appearing in the two most recent audience favorites). Thank you for your generosity in supporting this magnificent company!

Annalisa Tkacheff *(Portia)* is thrilled to be a part of this fun and unique production. Favorite stage credits include: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Hippolyta/Peaseblossom), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Miep), and *Cheaper by the Dozen* (Martha). A bay area native, Annalisa holds a BA in English with a concentration in late Shakespearean plays from Santa Clara University. As the Executive Director at Silicon Valley Shakespeare, she is proud to be part of a small-but-mighty team working to keep theatre relevant, accessible, and sustainable online until we can all be together again.
Valerie Valenzuela (Maria) is thankful to be working with SVS once again! Back in “The Before Times,” she’d oscillate between performing and choreographing for various companies in the South Bay and South Valley. Her last project with SVS was as choreographer and as Philostrate/Cobweb in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. While in lockdown, Valerie performed in SBMT’s eStudio production of Dracula as Lucy Westerna. She also filmed the short play DMV Tyrant as part of a collection of comedies with SVCT earlier this year. Additionally, she lent her voice to a few Zoom readings of the animated queer soap opera, Victoria Place, playing the role of Mercedes. She’s thankful for individuals and companies who are working to keep the arts alive during these challenging times. Valerie sends special thanks to her mama, Irene, & her husband, Ronnie, for their constant support.

Cindy Weisberg (Kate) is excited to appear in her first SVS production as an actor, after directing A Midsummer Night’s Dream in 2019. She’s also excited to play a shrew, having spent 3 years with the Los Gatos Shakespeare Festival as ingenues including Sylvia, Celia, and Bianca. Other favorite roles are Mabel in An Ideal Husband (The Pear), Fran in Promises, Promises (SBMT), and Paulette in Legally Blonde (SCP). Also possibly sneaking in an appearance is her baby to be, who had a blast kicking their way through their first Shakespeare!

Aaron Weisberg (Petruchio) most recently appeared as Lord Goring in An Ideal Husband (Pear Theatre) where he gained valuable experience bantering with Kyle and proposing to Cindy. He’s also had the joy of performing as Henry Higgins in My Fair Lady (Woodside Community Theatre), Harold Hill in The Music Man (SJ Lyric Theatre), and David O. Selznick in Moonlight and Magnolias (Dragon Productions Theatre). For A Midsummer Night’s Dream (SVS) Aaron served as Assistant Director and BoomWhacker conductor.

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Stephanie Whigham (Cleopatra) was last seen by SVS audiences as Narrator in The White Snake, and also played Cleopatra in Antony & Cleopatra. Recent roles include Oba-San/Moon Queen in The True Tale of Princess Kaguya (Kunoishi) and Jerrie in Coded (CLTC). Other notable roles include Anna in Closer (NTC), Estelle in No Exit (Mojo), and Columbia in The Rocky Horror Show (Roshi). In her 25 years in theatre she has worked as a stage manager, costume designer, properties designer, and electrician for companies such as PacRep, San Jose Stage, Palo Alto Players and Opera San Jose. She has a BFA in Graphic Design from SJSU, and designs for several Bay Area theatre companies. She is also the Marketing Director for The Tabard Theatre Company and will be playing Elaine in their production of Arsenic & Old Lace in May. More at www.stephaniewhigham.com

Silicon Valley Shakespeare would like to extend a big “thank you” to Lisa Claybaugh and Tom Shamrell for their support of and special contributions to this production of The “Dear Will” Letters.

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