



VENUS & ADONIS



We are happy to announce that our Kickstarter will be launching in the new year, 2021! We will be sending the details soon so be on the lookout for our email. In the meantime, you can support us by sharing this email with anyone you think would be interested in this project. Another way is to sign up for our Kickstarter notification by making an account and clicking the "notify me on launch" button located on our pre-launch page linked below. We wish you many happy tidings and thank you for your support, as always!

—Windflower Performances

Kickstarter

*Oh! And please check out our newly designed website at
www.windflowerperformances.com*



Jack
Wetherall



A Note from Our Director

I must preface this by saying that I am not an academic. My understanding of Shakespeare's work comes from being an actor and finding a human sounding of the text. The text continues to reveal itself in a profound and humbling fashion and inevitably is a catalyst for a myriad of thoughts and revelations in one's own life.

In directing *Venus & Adonis* I have been inspired to deepen my engagement with Shakespeare's six line verse structure that is the dramatic stitch through his narrative poem. And I wonder, why six lines? There appears to be an inherent power, magic and energy in the six line unit. Jeff, our Adonis, reminds me that 6 is a perfect number, if you know your math. The atomic number of carbon, the essence of all life on earth, is 6, if you know your chemistry and physics.

And now I have entered a portal to my life's past.

In 1980, my great friend and Shakespeare mentor, Dan Seltzer, passed away. He was a renowned actor, teacher and Shakespeare scholar. He was on sabbatical from Princeton University and had just returned from Paris where he played Hamm in Beckett's *Endgame*, directed by Joseph Chaikin. I was at the Stratford Festival Theatre in Canada rehearsing to play Henry V in the upcoming season. Dan and I had always wanted to play Falstaff and Prince Hal opposite each other, but just as in the play I was rehearsing, I received news that my Falstaff had died. To my surprise, in his will, Dan had requested that I

speaking the dirge from *Cymbeline* in the event of a memorial service for him. This transpired at The Manhattan Theatre Club in New York which had originally produced *Endgame*. And there I was staring at the six lines

*"Fear no more the heat o' th' sun
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers come to dust."*

The song, in the play spoken by Guiderius and Arviragus, continues for three more verses. They had originally sung the song at their mother's funeral and were here offering it up over their adored Fidele. And thereby hangs a tale! Speaking the song at my friend's send-off, the elegant power of the six line verses, informed by my own personal connection to the words, was overwhelming in my life.

In 2001, on September 11th, a beautiful sunny morning, I was attempting to fly back to New York from Toronto where I had been shooting the TV series *Queer As Folk*...when the World Trade Center Towers came down. Two weeks later I was able to fly home. As I was riding in my taxi from La Guardia Airport to Manhattan, a grey dank morning, I was forced to confront the city's skyline. And I began to recite through tears:

*"A glooming peace this morning with it brings
The sun for sorrow will not show his head.
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;
Some shall be pardoned, and some punished;
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo."*

Six lines of verse, comprising a quatrain of alternating rhyme at the end of the lines, driving home with a rhyming couplet. This time in perfect iambic pentameter. *Romeo and Juliet* starts with a fourteen line sonnet but the story, exhausting in its emotional toll, can only muster the final six lines of what might have been a sonnet. Nevertheless the musical symmetry of the play is rounded out. And for me at that moment in the taxi, when meaning is only enhanced by personal connection, six lines resonated once more with overwhelming power. And continue to do so.

In 2020, exhausted by months of Covid restraint, I here locate myself again in six lines from *Venus & Adonis* that Shakespeare composed when challenged with the Bubonic plague of 1593.

*“Long may they kiss each other, for this cure!
O, never let their crimson liveries wear;
And as they last, their verdure still endure,
To drive infection from the dangerous year;
That the stargazers, having writ on death,
May say the plague is banished by thy breath.”*

Each verse a quatrain and rhyming couplet. Six!

When I first read *Venus & Adonis* as a young actor, I put it aside far too quickly. Now with a little experience, more patience and diligence, the poem is clearly revealing itself in such an exciting fashion. We want to share our excitement with you. The poem/story is rather like a rich and sumptuous dessert. We have decided to divide it into chapters or episodes that you can savor separately or feast on all together. Six!



- Jack

Artwork by Maggie T Sutrov
www.paintthere.com