

FYI

## Master Letters/Master of Fine Arts in Shakespeare

MARY BALDWIN COLLEGE

### CONTACT

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### OVERVIEW

Launched in fall 2001 in partnership with the acclaimed American Shakespeare Center and utilizing its authentically recreated Jacobean theatre, The Blackfriars Playhouse, Mary Baldwin College has combined academic and applied aspects of Shakespeare's original staging to offer a unique Master of Letters/Master of Fine Arts in Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature in Performance. The marriage of scholarship and stagecraft sets it apart from other graduate programs, which tend to emphasize one or the other.

### EDUCATION

Graduate students may concentrate on acting, dramaturgy, directing, or teaching. Students who complete the master of letters program may choose to continue with advanced work (an additional 30 hours of course work) leading to the master of fine arts — a terminal degree for higher education arts positions.

Graduate students are taught by MBC faculty and distinguished visiting scholars, actors, and directors.

### FACULTY

**Paul Menzer** is an associate professor and director of the MLitt/MFA program. He has published widely on Shakespeare and performance, including the books *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage* (2006) and *The Hamlets: Cues, Qs, and the remembered text* (2008). His plays *The Brats of Clarence* and *Anonymous* have appeared on the Blackfriars stage and elsewhere. He holds a bachelor's degree from University of Maryland and a master's degree from Georgetown University. He earned a PhD in Renaissance literature from University of Virginia.

**Ralph Alan Cohen** is the founding executive director and director of mission at the American Shakespeare Center. He is also the Virginia Worth Gonder Fellow and professor of English at MBC. He is the author of *ShakesFear and How to Cure It: A Handbook for Teaching Shakespeare* (2006), and has published articles on teaching Shakespeare as well as on Shakespeare, Jonson, and Elizabethan staging. Cohen was an undergraduate at Dartmouth College, earned his doctorate at Duke University, and has honorary degrees from Georgetown University and St. Lawrence University.

**Jaq Bessell** is an assistant professor at MBC whose earlier work includes a

term as director of research at London's Globe Theatre. She frequently directs productions for the American Shakespeare Center, both on tour and at the Blackfriars.

**Colleen Kelly** is a part-time MLitt/MFA instructor who also works for the American Shakespeare Center. Kelly teaches acting and movement. She is former vice president — and so far the only woman to hold that position — of the Society of American Fight Directors.

The visiting faculty includes:

- Tom Berger, scholar in residence and emeritus professor at St. Lawrence University.
- Barbara Palmer, scholar in residence and emeritus professor of English at the University of Mary Washington
- Giles Block, master of the word, Globe Theatre, London
- John Frick, New York University, professor of drama, University of Virginia
- Andrew Gurr, professor of English, Reading University in England, academic head, Globe Theatre, London
- Tina Packer, founder and artistic director, Shakespeare & Company
- Tiffany Stern, fellow of University College, Oxford University
- William Proctor Williams, professor of English emeritus, Northern Illinois University, and senior lecturer, University of Akron
- Jenny Tiramani, costumer and prop master, Globe Theatre, London

## **STUDENT LIFE**

Fifty graduate students take advantage of innovative class scheduling, which includes short, intensive courses within a semester, as well as semester-long classes.

MLitt/MFA students are fortunate to work with the nationally renowned American Shakespeare Center in the Blackfriars Playhouse, the only replica of Shakespeare's indoor theatre. Students perform and direct work inspired by the material conditions of the theatrical world in which Shakespeare lived and worked. On-stage internships are available for qualified students.

The independent student organization, The University Wits, complements the curricular offerings with summer productions, the annual 24-hour theater festival, and social events. In 2008, for example, The Wits toured the region with a production of *The Tempest*.

## **GRADUATES**

The first three students to earn both the master of letters and the master of fine arts graduated in May 2004 were hooded during their commencement by world famous and award-winning English actress, Dame Judi Dench.

Graduates have gone on to take tenure-track positions, start their own companies, pursue PhDs, and teach Shakespeare in high schools.

## **MBC**

Founded in 1842, Mary Baldwin College is a national leader in personalized, transformative, liberal education. The historic Residential College for Women, offered on the college's main campus in Staunton, Virginia, is complemented by adult degree and graduate programs for men and women, offered on campus as well as at five regional centers statewide.