

HAMLET - Characters

Disclaimer: Number of scenes may vary slightly in the final script.

Hamlet (m/f) major (10 scenes)(sings)

Our protagonist is often displayed as crazy madman or as sobbing emo or as an unfathomable enigma. We won't do that. But I don't want to characterize him with what he is not, but rather with what singles him out.

Hamlet's journey starts with love, but over the course of the play, he feels like everyone he loves or loved has left or betrayed him. (At least Horatio is still there, caring!) He is a witty, bookish person, who struggled all his life with the difficult relation with his soldierly father. When his father dies, he struggles to cope, but with his assignment to avenge his father's murder, he struggles even more. Struggle may be a topic here.

He feels lost in his pain with his mother remarried so soon. His relationship with Ophelia comes to an abrupt (unwanted!) halt and as she becomes entangled in her father's plots, Hamlet heart breaks: he faces his worst betrayal. He can't bear his own life anymore. He descends more and more into his madness.

In this production, Hamlet's madness is partly staged as his mental issues - in a very contemporary way: as symptoms of depression, anxiety or even bipolar disorder. Hamlet hides his vulnerability behind a facade of sarcastic humour and charm, sometimes becoming his own comic relief. The focus in this production is to make Hamlet relatable and human.

THE ROYALS

Claudius (m) major (12 scenes) (sings)

Long story short: Claudius killed his older brother for the throne. And surprise: he wants to keep it secret. He is an ambitious and charming politician, an adept manipulator and thinks he is far more fit to be king than his late brother. The sad truth is that this may even be true, but his vile deed tainted his mind. He is constantly suspicious if someone might know and of course is startled by Hamlet's strange behaviour. So he starts to spy Hamlet out, with the help of his loyal, yet oblivious advisor Polonius. In the Mousetrap scene he realizes what he has become and what he has done, and has a brief shock. As a conclusion, he tries to get rid of Hamlet, with mixed results. He manipulates Laertes to kill Hamlet in a fencing match, but just to be sure, he poisons a cup. Thanks to him, nearly everyone is dead in the end, including him, finally killed by Hamlet. Madness seems to run in the family...

Gertrude (f) major (10 scenes)

The Queen and mother of Hamlet remarried soon after she became a widow. Her child is deeply upset by her behaviour, but nevertheless she enjoys her new marriage to a younger and more galant king than her former husband ever was. Was it even a marriage for love? Gertrude is rather self-involved and ignorant towards her child's problems. She does actually care for him with all her soul and is a loving mother, but she simply can't get what's going on, even though she realizes his problem with her incestuous new marriage. Maybe she doesn't want to see what is going on around her? Maybe she is glad she could escape a loveless marriage and wanted to have a fresh, new start with a charming man? All this collapses in the final scene, when Gertrude realizes that her husband wants to kill her son - Hamlet was

right all along. When Claudius wants to stop her from drinking from the poisoned cup, everything becomes clear to her - and she drinks willingly.

Ghost (m) minor (2 scenes + 1 awesome video-appearance)

Old King Hamlet was killed in his sleep - by his younger brother Claudius. He fought in many wars and has a cold and soldierly appeal, as opposed to the sleek and charming Claudius. His Ghost walks the battlements of Elsinore and visits Prince Hamlet to request revenge for his murder. He demands something which is self-evident for him, but 100% opposed to the nature of his son (hence all the thinking and waiting..). Though Old Hamlet never understood his son at all, Prince Hamlet has always struggled to live up to his father's high expectations. Now, the order for revenge is young Hamlet's last chance to prove to his father that he is good enough, after all.

THE OTHER FAMILY

Mirroring the royal family, there is another family at court which has to deal with loss and consequent revenge. A very caring and loving family - but where is the mother? Maybe her absence (death?) is the reason for the overprotectiveness towards Ophelia?

Polonius (m) major (7 scenes)

Polonius' life is split: At work, he is the scheming right-hand man of the king, whilst at home, he is a loving and overbearing parent. He tries to have everything under his control, but sometimes he is simply oblivious to the things happening around him or loses track of what he wanted to say. When Hamlet feigns his madness, Polonius wants to get to the bottom of this and doesn't shy away from even using his daughter in his endeavour. At the bottom of his heart, he just wants to protect the people near him but doesn't realize when he goes too far. After the "Mousetrap", Polonius visits the flustered Queen in her closet. When Hamlet arrives, Polonius hides behind a curtain, but Hamlet thinks it is Claudius and stabs him.

Ophelia (f) major (5 scenes + 1 without text + 1 dumbshow projection) (sings)

Hamlet and Ophelia have a quirky, but deep connection. They have the same interest in philosophy and love to juggle with ideas and phrases: Ophelia has a sharp mind and is on par with Hamlet. Sheltered but also patronized by her family, she has developed a dependency on them and has become vulnerable. This explains why she follows her father's instruction to break up with Hamlet: she loves her father even more than him. But when Hamlet doesn't seem to care, she is deeply hurt. In the "nunnery scene", the situation escalates: After first being glad to meet again, Hamlet notices that Ophelia is being instrumentalized by her father to spy on him and he gets furious. Ophelia can't handle the manipulation through her father anymore and is devastated what has happened to her love - her soul begins to crack. When Polonius is killed by Hamlet, she has a mental break-down. After singing snatches of old tunes, she distributes flowers, plucking them from her arms (special make-up idea: dried flowers are glued to her forearms). Her madness is portrayed with additional projections. Unable to handle life anymore, she soon drowns (herself?) in a creek. (Beautifully described by Gertrude!)

Laertes (m/f) medium (6 scenes)

A passionate and protective sibling to Ophelia, Laertes always has advice for his little sister. At the beginning of the play, he leaves Elsinore to study in Paris. After his beloved father is killed, he comes home to a distressed Ophelia, which breaks his heart. He wants to avenge his father's death and to take action against the injustice that is happening to his family. Opposed to the passive Hamlet, he deals more actively with the death of his father. When Ophelia drowns, Claudius can convince Laertes to duel Hamlet. They kill each other in a fencing match at the finale of the play.

THE FRIENDS

Hamlet's friends and from classmates from university in Wittenberg. They all come to visit, to support Hamlet at his father's funeral....or, er, his mother's wedding? Well, kinda both. But they all have different reasons to visit...

Horatio (m/f) medium (6 scenes)

The one true, honest soul in the whole play. Hamlet and Horatio both study philosophy in Wittenberg. Horatio is a scholar and a sceptic: when he sees the ghost of Hamlet's father, he can't seem to trust his eyes. He is Hamlet's ally during "The Mousetrap" and witnesses Claudius' discomfort. Throughout the play, Horatio stands patiently by Hamlet's side, no matter what. He cares deeply for Hamlet. A true tower of strength!

Rosencrantz (m/f) medium (5 scenes) + Guildenstern (m/f) medium (5 scenes)

R + G only appear as a team in the play - a shallow, superficial, kiss-ass duo infernale. Claudius invited them to Elsinore to help him spy on Hamlet. Guildenstern is the talker of the two, but stays silent when he gets accused. Guildenstern is quickly convinced of Hamlet's madness, but Rosencrantz isn't so sure. Hamlet likes his fun, but superficial friends, even though preferring G to R. Until he realizes, what the two are up to...

THE PLAYERS

Player One (King) (m/f) minor (2 scenes with text)

Player Two (Queen) (m/f) minor (1 scene with text, 1 without)

Player Three (Lucianus) (m/f) minor (1 scene with text, 1 without)

Additional Dancers as Extras (2 scenes without text)

The Players are a traveling theatre company that visits Elsinore. Hamlet already knows them from previous performances and, as a true thespian, is overjoyed by their arrival. When they arrive, the First Player shows his craftsmanship with a monologue, sending Hamlet into a soliloquy.

In the Mousetrap scene, the group shows off all their talents: In this production, the players are also dancers and singers, transforming the scene to a musical. The three main players will sing their lines and act out the scene, while the dancing extras emphasize the meaning and the plot in symbolic movements. A true highlight before the intermission!

→ The specifics about music and dance will be worked out in the early stages of the rehearsals, if you have any ideas, feel free to contact me!

THE SECURITY GUARDS

Important people have to be kept safe - so of course the king has his own security service watching the whole castle. Our three guards witness the deceased king's ghost walking the castle's battlement and start off the play's actions. When Hamlet kills Polonius later on, the court is under the state of emergency - and the three guards gear up (bulletproof vest and assault rifle included!).

Marcellus (m/f) minor (4 scenes with text, 1-2 without)

He is the Head of Security and Captain of the guard. He can't seem to remember Francisco's name for the life of his, though. A bit more pragmatic, he isn't afraid of the ghost. He is loyal to Prince Hamlet, but when the murder occurs, he has to keep the court safe at any cost.

Bernardo (m/f) minor (3 scenes with text, 1-2 without)

He has been working as a guard for a long time, but all his experience can't help him stand the thought of the ghost. He is afraid and finds the whole ghost-situation really unpleasant, but doesn't want anyone to know. Fortunately, Francisco is even jumpier!

Francisco (m/f) minor (2 scenes with text, 1-2 without)

He is the newest addition to the guard and so of course he has to do the graveyard shift on the battlements. Poor Francisco is a bit overwhelmed and becomes a little paranoid at the thought of the ghost.

THE STAFF

Osric (m/f) medium (3 scenes with text, at least 3 additional without lines)

Osric is Polonius' apprentice at court. In the first half of the play, he is regularly on stage to aid and assist his boss (no lines though). When Polonius is killed by Hamlet, the dutiful Osric fills his position and takes care of the king's tasks. He acts as a messenger and organizes the duel in the last scene.

Gravedigger (m/f) minor (1 scene) (sings)

A crude and screwed up person who spent his life digging graves. When Hamlet and Horatio meet at the graveyard, he sings gleefully while he digs. He jokes around with them until he digs up the famous skull of Yorick, the long-deceased jester. A contemplating Hamlet ensues.

Priest (m/f) minor (1 scene with text, 1 without)

The man of faith who is the caretaker of the distressed Ophelia and who ordains her funeral in the second-to-last scene. Even though Laertes is indignant at the way his sister is laid to rest, the priest can't help in any way. Due to the sketchy circumstances of Ophelia's death, even the Christian burial on the graveyard is a stretch to him. (Suicide is considered a sin, so she actually "shouldn't" be buried in consecrated ground.)