

*Bonn University Shakespeare Company presents:*

*Rosencrantz & Guildenstern: A Ghost Story*

*All Underworld's A Stage. – William Shakespeare, shortly after his death*

For this year's summer production, the BUSC takes W.S. Gilbert's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern into the land of the dead where everything is the opposite and nothing seems in place. Expect ghosts, plotting, unfinished businesses and endless loops in a purgatory state!

Many of you are familiar with one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, Hamlet. But did you ever ask yourselves what happened to all those beloved tragic characters after they died? Did they ever find redemption? Were they finally free once their souls left their earthly bodies? Or were they stuck in another broken cycle that cursed their wandering spirits forever? Whose redemption would be the key to freeing these souls?

In *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern: A Ghost Story*, we travel to the underworld where things seem normal at first until a game of flipping coins alerts our protagonists that something is not right. They then start their journey to discover the unfinished business of the dead souls. Replaying their last days on earth and wondering what has gone wrong, they are the ones who solve the mystery of a once unsuccessful writer turned evil.

With lines borrowed from the original play, W.S. Gilbert's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern has turned into a modern adaptation where you can see the never-seen-before aspects of your beloved characters portrayed on stage.

**The auditions will be held as individual meetings with the director. Please register for an audition slot using the form linked below.**

**Each slot is 15 minutes (only one per person). Please choose up to 2 monologues from below that you would like to perform. You do not have to know them by heart, but please prepare them. Use this link register:**

<https://calendly.com/busc/busc-auditions>

***Please note: For this casting process, we are using the pronouns and descriptions from the original text, however, casting will be completely gender-blind. Please audition for the role(s) you like best :)***

# The Roles

<b>ROSENCRANTZ</b>	One of prince Hamlet's best friends, Rosencrantz is quite a charming and handsome character. He is in love with Hamlet's Fiancé and stops at nothing to get Hamlet out of the way. He is mostly looking for ways to win and doesn't dwell much on his surroundings as long as they play in his favor.
<b>GUILDENSTERN</b>	Prince Hamlet's other best friend, Guildenstern is the voice of reason. He is more aware of the changes that take place around him and compared to Rosencrantz is a more skeptical character with the ability to philosophize everything. He is the key to breaking the spell.
<b>CLAUDIUS</b>	The "new" king of Denmark has a secret he hasn't shared with anybody until now: he is a failed theater playwright. Bitter by his career never soaring, he has become a tyrant who's only solution to every ridicule is capital punishment. He needs to right his wrongs to free himself and others from the purgatory they all are stuck in. The redemption of all others depends on him.
<b>GERTRUDE</b>	Queen Gertrude, wife of two kings, loves nothing more than her son in this (under)world. But that doesn't stop her from criticizing his strange behavior. Fed up by his constant feats of soliloquy, she calls upon his friends to help deviate him from his passions.
<b>HAMLET JR.</b>	Prince Hamlet of Denmark, Son of King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude is everything his uncle loathes. He frequents in long soliloquies and does not appreciate being interrupted. He is tricked into putting a play on stage by his friends and goes on long monologues to show professional actors how acting is done.
<b>HAMLET SNR.</b>	The original ghost of Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet Snr. has seen it all. He appears as a God-like figure, having a presence in most scenes and commenting or mocking the stupidity of newbie ghosts. His only friend, who can see him, is the Gravedigger, Tom Stopp.

<b>OPHELIA</b>	Childhood friend to Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Ophelia is betrothed to marry the prince. However, she doesn't seem to be so thrilled about it. When she sees a chance to get her fiancé out of the way, she immediately offers to help Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with their plot against Hamlet. She has access to her father's, the Lord Chamberlain's office where all the haunted old plays are being kept and discovers a secret that can change their deaths for the better.
<b>GRAVEDIGGER</b>	He has been in this business for as long as he remembers. His ordinary name, Tom Stopp, does not even remotely reflect his extraordinary life. He can see ghosts and has specially taken a liking to the late King of Denmark, Hamlet snr. When he sees a play being put together in the underworld, he decides to show up and experience the world of the dead up close.
<b>PLAYER</b>	The actor who's been in this business for as long as he remembers and has continued to act even after his death. He seems to be aware of his circumstances and the fact that they are currently in purgatory but he doesn't seem to care because he believes that "the show must go on". He banter with Hamlet when the prince tries to give them a lesson about how to act.

## Monologue

*Rosencrantz, the charming best friend of Prince Hamlet, looks for a little bit of fun. His somewhat ignorant, somewhat playful manner is more visible when contrasted with Guildenstern. In this scene he tries to make sense of the fact that they have been having the same result for coin tosses at least 80 times in a row. This character has a combination of spoken English and blank verse:*

### **Rosencrantz**

One: This is actually what I want. Inside my head, I am the essence of a man flipping double-headed coins and betting against himself in private atonement for an unremembered past.

Two: Time has stopped dead and the single experience of one coin being flipped once has been repeated eighty-seven times...probably not very accurate on a whole.

Three: divine intervention, as if God has nothing better to do so she has decided to play a game with me. A means of retribution? But for whom? Who knows.

Four: a breathtaking vindication of principle that each individual coin flipped individually is as likely to come down heads as tails and therefore should cause no surprise each individual time it does...Heads

## Monologue

*Guildenstern, the skeptical one of the two friends, has realized that there is something off with the circumstances, him and Rosencrantz are currently in. He tries to figure out their situation by questioning their surroundings. This character has a combination of spoken English and blank verse in the play:*

### **Guildenstern**

Let me retrace my steps. We try to examine a phenomena using scientific approach because it is the very thing we need for defense against the pure emotion of fear. We clench our fists around it and hold on to dear life when there's still time. Now bear with me this as it may prove a comfort: assuming that within un-, sub- or supernatural forces the law of probability will not operate as a factor, then we accept that the probability of the law of probability operating as a factor also does not operate as a factor. Considering this, the law of probability will operate as a factor within un-, sub-, or supernatural forces. And, since it obviously hasn't been doing so, we can conclude that we are not held within un-, sub- or supernatural forces after all: in all probability that is. Which is a great relief to me personally (*small pause*) which sounds real great, except that... We have been spinning coins together since I don't know when.

### Monologue

*Claudius, Prince Hamlet's uncle, had a passion for writing in the five-act tragedies. Unfortunately, his career never really soared and he never confessed to anyone about having written plays. For the first time, he is confiding in his bride to learn of his secret and the tragedy that went terribly wrong:*

### **Claudius**

Well-loved and faithful wife,  
Tender companion of my faltering life,  
Yes, I can trust thee! Listen, then, to me:  
Many years since – when but a headstrong lad –  
I wrote a five-act tragedy.  
A play writ by a king –  
Finds ready market. It was read at once,  
But ere 'twas read, accepted. Then the Press  
Teemed with portentous import. Elsinore  
Was duly placarded by willing hands;  
We know that walls have ears – I gave them  
tongues –  
And they were eloquent with promises.  
The day approached – all Denmark stood agape.  
Arrangements were devised at once by which  
Seats might be booked a twelvemonth in advance.  
The first night came.

Monologue

*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is ready for his most famous lines to be delivered to his yearning audience. But will he succeed?*

**Hamlet Jr.**

To be or not to be—that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—  
No more—and by a sleep to say we end  
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—  
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time  
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin?

Monologue

*The former king of Denmark looks on as the events unfold in front of him. He is quite bored with these newbie ghosts and looks for something interesting to happen sometime soon. The character has spoken English dialogues in the play:*

**Hamlet Snr.**

I am thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night  
And for the day confined to fast in fires  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their  
spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand an end,  
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.  
But this eternal blazon must not be  
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—  
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

### Monologue

*Ophelia reunites with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern after a long time. She informs them of her engagement to the prince of Denmark. Once asked about what she actually thinks of her fiancé, she responds as follows:*

*Also relevant for: Gertrude (with a more concerned edge to it)*

### **Ophelia**

[He is] Alike for no two seasons at a time.  
Sometimes he's tall – sometimes he's very short –  
Now with black hair – now with a flaxen wig –  
Sometimes with an English accent –  
then a French –  
Then English with a strong provincial "burr."  
Once an American, and once a Jew  
But Danish never, take him how you will!  
And strange to say, whate'er his tongue may be,  
Whether he's dark or flaxen –  
English – French –  
Though we're in Denmark, A.D. ten-six-two—  
He always dresses as King James the First!  
Some men hold  
That he's the sanest, far, of all sane men –  
Some that he's really sane, but shamming mad –  
Some that he's really mad, but shamming sane –  
Some that he will be mad, some that he was  
Some that he couldn't be. But on the whole  
(As far as I can make out what they mean)  
The favorite theory's somewhat like this:  
Hamlet is idiotically sane  
With lucid intervals of lunacy.

## Monologue

*The Gravedigger, Tom Stopp, the only human alive in the play, recalls Prince Hamlet's moment with his favorite jester, Yorick's skull. He reflects upon how the young Prince would speak fondly of the jester and maybe even questions his phrasing a bit. This hints at his interest in role playing:*

### **Gravedigger**

Yuri? Yarico? Oh Yorick. How did he used to say it?

Alas poor Yorick a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

He hath bore me on his back a thousand times,

and now how abhorred in my imagination it is!

My gorge rises at it. Here hung

those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. (hmmmm)

Where be your gibes now? your gambols? Your

songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to

set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your

own grinning? Quite chapfallen? Now get you to my

lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch

thick, to this favor she must come. Make her laugh at that.

## Monologue

*Player, the professional actor of the realm of the dead, makes his first entrance when summoned to the court by Hamlet Jr. to take part in the Royal Play. He introduces himself to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern upon arrival:*

### **Player**

Don't you see? We are actors, we are the opposite of people! We're actors...we pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade, that someone would be watching. And then, gradually, no one was. We were caught, high and dry. Even then, habit and a stubborn trust that our audience spied upon us from behind the nearest bush, forced our bodies to blunder on long after they had emptied of meaning, until like runaway carts they dragged to a halt. No one came forward. No one shouted at us. The silence was unbreakable, it imposed itself upon us, it was obscene. We took off our crowns and swords and cloth of gold and moved silent on the road to Elsinore.