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## Ages of [Wo]Man

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# AGES OF [WO]MAN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Theatre

by

Amanda Jane Clark

B.A., University of Northern Colorado, 2005

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Thank you to all of my family, for understanding my journey and always being a sturdy support system. A big thank you to my fellow M.F.A classmates and all of the public that came out to support this endeavor. Without you, art cannot grow. Thank you for sharing your time with me. Lastly, to my loving husband Anthony McMurray “My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep the more I give to thee / the more I have, for both are infinite.” (*Romeo & Juliet* II.ii.984-987)

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## Abstract

Ages of [Wo]Man, was written to fulfill the thesis requirements of a solo performance for the M.F.A in Acting at Louisiana State University (LSU) in May 2015. The purpose of this project is to write, produce and perform a solo performance, to be reproduced after my time here at LSU. This paper documents the conception of my work, adaptation of Shakespeare's text, rehearsal process and production of this piece. It contains five chapters. Chapter 1 is comprised of an introduction and discussion of how I decided on the topic for my solo performance. Chapter 2 continues with a layout of the objectives for the piece, including accessibility of Shakespeare's text to a modern audience, gender bending roles, celebrating life and aging. Chapter 3 is the process of writing the script and adapting Shakespeare's text. In Chapter 4 I describe my acting and rehearsal process and finally, in Chapter 5, a conclusion on the experience.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

I moved to Louisiana in the summer of 2010, with my husband, on his journey to earn an M.F.A in acting from Louisiana State University. Being a spouse to an M.F.A student, I knew what his experience was and watched the thesis process first hand. When time came for me to apply to graduate school, I was admitted to the same program in the incoming class of 2013. By that time, I had seen two rounds of thesis solo performances and saw a range of storytelling. One thing that rang true about all of them was that each show definitely represented each actor's point of view and style. All were unique.

When the time came for me to start work on my own one-person show, I found it to be daunting. The writing of a piece didn't shake me; it was the context in which I was writing. There is a saying about writing that I have always remembered, though I don't recall who said it, "Write what you know". At the ripe age of twenty-seven, I have an interesting amount of life experience about which I could write a piece with which people might identify with. To me, the most important part of creating art is figuring out with whom you can connect. Who will, for one moment, not feel alone and relate with a common human experience? Better yet who can I help?

Too many times I have sat and watched solo performances that end up greedy, a sort of therapy session to which we all were invited. Which calls into question, why do you act? Why theatre? For me it is to invoke conversation, throw a new way of thinking at the world, I believe that theatre can change people, which is why I am pursuing this career. This is the best way for me to use what I have been given to help my country, community, and fellow citizens. Also, I am

not at a point in my life to tell the darker shades of my life experience. It takes guts to create an autobiographical work, but it also takes grace and nuance to use your story for a better purpose.

With this in mind, I started researching subgroups that we inhabit when we have lost our sense of home: churches, Alcoholics Anonymous, running clubs etc. My attention was drawn to the Red Hats Society. These ladies have a new rush of life and they are revived and continue to live everyday as fully as possible. How wonderful! Aging is a huge challenge with which human beings struggle; we gain weight, lose our hair, our vision, and even our memories that have created us.

As I began writing the script I realized I would be playing a range of older women, which would be a great story to tell. Through my research I found a range of different points of view on the society and why these women chose to join. During this phase of research I started to think of my acting work and how to approach these characters. In the back of my head I thought, “If this is a play about older women, why not have older women tell the story?” After researching the Red Hat Society, I became upset with the fees these ladies had to pay to be a part of these clubs and gatherings. The concept of someone paying for friendship upset me. These should be open clubs for anyone needing a support group. So, with a touch of sadness, I put that story on the self and began anew.

What am I going to write about? What now? I had already put all my pennies into that jar, and didn't have another topic I was passionate about. I needed passion to create something otherwise what I would create would be dull and void of meaning.

Shakespeare's plays have always been my favorite work to do. That man had a prodigious understanding of the human experience. Okay, Shakespeare, what do I do with that? I

was having a conversation with a fellow graduate student and he mentioned a breeches actress who lived in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century who was a pioneer of her time. Originally from Massachusetts, Charlotte Cushman had an amazing career playing many male roles in drag, from which the term “breeches” actress came into play. I studied her memoirs and did extensive research on her life. I found my new thesis! What drew me to this topic was the idea of women playing iconic male roles, such as, Romeo, Hamlet and Falstaff. I found it fascinating that women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were given the opportunity to perform these monumental roles when our current society does not embrace this concept. Shakespeare’s male characters have some of the greatest words of all and many of the struggles these male characters have, women also share. Vengeance, power struggles and leadership are not just male experiences, but human experiences. The idea that I would have the opportunity to get to play some of these roles was a challenge that I wanted to undertake. After writing the play, I realized that the memoir that I had adapted had strict copyright laws attached, which I did not properly investigate, and thus I was unable to finish the project.

So, once again I was back at the drawing board, but this cross-gender Shakespeare concept lingered in my head. After many weeks of worrying and conversation with my advisor, George Judy, I was getting to a point that I needed to solidify my plan. During one of my sessions with Nick Erickson, movement professor at LSU, he mentioned the idea of adapting Jacques’ speech on the Seven Ages of Man from *As You Like It*. He mentioned that this could be a throughline to do a Shakespearean piece and string together other Shakespearean text within it. I was unfamiliar with the speech, with the exception of the opening line: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players”. (II.vii.1037-1038) Later that day I looked the speech up and there I started to see the show take form. I could string together Shakespearean



speeches and get to play the different, traditionally male roles, that I had originally wanted to do with my previous concept. With much anticipation and a new burst of creative energy, I locked myself in my apartment and started digging in my *Complete Works of Shakespeare*. I was ready to build.

## Chapter 2 Why?

As I began reading the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* and looking through all of his plays, I asked myself, “are you just doing a showcase?” The last thing I wanted to do was something that wouldn’t benefit a greater purpose. How would this solo performance serve the public? What story was I trying to tell? Yes, I will admit that I mostly chose Shakespeare to work on a repertoire of his pieces and I wanted to bulk up my personal understanding of Shakespearean text, but I also wanted to make Shakespeare accessible to the audience.

During my time at LSU, I had an assistantship in the Swine Palace Office. I was assigned to write and produce a Shakespeare workshop for high schools in the Baton Rouge area. The main question we kept talking about while creating the workshop was, “why is Shakespeare still important today?” Why do we continue to produce his work? Why do we force the younger generations to read it? As I had mentioned in the introduction, Shakespeare has an understanding of what we experience emotionally in our lives better than most artists in history. He is a master; his literature should be passed onto every generation and be respected. This workshop is only the starting point of my focus on accessibility. In addition, we perform a summer Shakespeare at LSU’s Swine Palace and audience members often say: “Shakespeare is hard to grasp and understand, how can we relate with something that was written so long ago,” and “how do we find common ground with William Shakespeare?”

I wanted my thesis show to be accessible to our audiences. I wanted to help others realize just how relatable Shakespeare is to all of us, even in our current society. This would be my super objective: To get the general public to relate and understand Shakespeare’s text in order to continue the legacy and performance of his work. I planned on selecting pieces from

Shakespeare's canon that would be easily identifiable to our modern ears and perform them in a modern style, omitting the assumptions of a faux British dialect, silly posing and flowery language. I would then insert and project some photos of people, places and things that we could relate to our human experience, and then marry this with the language to help fill in any gaps that may arise during the performance. The focus of the Jaques' speech is aging and the different stages of life. I would plan to perform as one person aging over time, which leads to another major theme of my piece.

Aging is a concept that our society fears. Most people despise aging and fear getting older every day, waiting for our bodies to slowly breakdown and our patience to grow or be stifled. I wanted to celebrate this process of life and appreciate all stages of life we go through, as opposed to looking at age as a looming dark matter that will eventually consume us.

The last theme that I wanted to integrate was gender bending Shakespeare's characters. I would perform both male and female pieces to further showcase the idea of a human experience rather than, just a male or female experience. Here, I will take some of the knowledge of the breeches actresses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and study parts that I may never be able to play again.

So, to answer the original question, "what story am I trying to tell?" I focused on telling the tale of Shakespeare's infinite wisdom about human experience without the separation of gender, while making his work accessible to our contemporary audiences, celebrating the journey of life and aging that many of us fear. Challenge accepted, now to the script.

### Chapter 3 The Script

My thesis finally had a pulse; I had something to build on. I dissected the Jaques' monologue and found the seven different sections of the speech to elaborate on. I read my *Complete Works of Shakespeare* over a dozen times, trying to find the right words to use to convey this story. Jaques goes through his seven ages of man; I picked apart the sections in which I would insert other Shakespeare monologues. These sections are noted below; I categorized them with an age, so that as I was researching pieces I could narrow down my options. The monologue below separates the ages by color, showing where I added the other text.

JAQUES:

All the world's a stage;

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts,

His acts being seven ages. **At first the infant,** \*INFANT

**Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.**

**And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel,** \*CHILD

**And shining morning face, creeping like snail**

**Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,** \*TEENAGER

**Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad**

**Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,** \*YOUNG ADULT

**Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,**

**Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,**

Seeking the bubble reputation

Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice, \*MIDDLE AGE

In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,

With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,

Full of wise saws and modern instances;

And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts \*ELDER

Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,

With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,

His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide

For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,

Turning again toward childish treble, pipes

And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all, \*ELDER/DEATH

That ends this strange eventful history,

Is second childishness and mere oblivion,

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. (II.vii.1036-1064)

After I had separated the monologue, I began to insert other Shakespeare pieces. The opening of the piece, “All the world’s a stage”, through “his acts being seven ages”, was an intro to the piece. This intro had underlay of images, crowds of people, a globe, and other various photos of different age groups.

The first stage of man is noted as the infant, this was actually the most challenging piece to select. Many of the mothers and fathers in Shakespeare’s canon, have an understandable amount of emotional weight, but not the kind that I wanted to invoke. I began looking through his sonnets. I wanted to show a new parent as opposed to playing an actual baby. I wanted to

show the moment in one's life when they have finally brought their new baby home, and the overwhelming amount of joy, pride and love new parents have for their children. This is an exciting time and also a nervous one; this would showcase the major changes in a parent's life and the shift in priorities new parents face. Sonnet 91 hit all of these themes and worked in well with this part of the show. I appreciated that this particular piece was genderless, starting my human experience throughline in a good place.

*Sonnet 91:*

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their bodies' force,  
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill,  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;  
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,  
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:  
But these particulars are not my measure;  
All these I better in one general best.  
Thy love is better than high birth to me,  
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,  
Of more delight than hawks or horses be;  
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:  
Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take  
All this away and me most wretched make. (*Sonnet XCI.1-14*)

After Sonnet 91, we transition into the child section. First I looked for more prominent characters such as Hamlet to fill this space. This idea was more of a comment on the character Hamlet, rather than using his experience to fuel my over arching plan. I kept digging, and started to look into *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I was drawn to this play because I felt it had the most fairytale feel to it, which I think goes hand in hand with early childhood. There were some Puck and Bottom monologues that were intriguing but then I came upon a piece that is done by a character named Fairy, just one of Titania's fairies and it is a piece that isn't used often. This monologue really soaked up the playtime aspect of early life. Endless curiosity and the idea that anything and everything is amazing, and that there is so much more discover, even if it's in the comfort of your own backyard.

FAIRY:

Over hill, over dale,  
Thorough bush, thorough brier,  
Over park, over pale,  
Thorough flood, thorough fire,  
I do wander everywhere,  
Swifter than the moon's sphere;  
And I serve the fairy queen,  
To dew her orbs upon the green.  
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:  
In their gold coats spots you see;  
Those be rubies, fairy favours,  
In those freckles live their savours:

I must go seek some dewdrops here  
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.  
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:  
Our queen and all our elves come here anon. (II.i.369-384)

I noted the next section as the teenager while Jaques notes it as the lover. This section rang in my ear and reminded me of early love. Those awkward days of early puberty, self-conscious of everything, acne, slow dances, bad love songs, stuffed bears from Valentine's Day, and movie ticket stubs from first dates, etc. But the feeling that I wanted to relay to the audience was that of feeling all the feelings at once. We fall for our first love and no one could ever possibly understand the hurt that we felt when love has wronged us. With this, I started looking for lovers, which if any person knows anything about Shakespeare, there are countless lovers in his canon. The obvious choice at first was to do a Romeo piece lovesick and fickle, he seemed to fit the bill, not to mention he actually was written as teenager. Though a part of me knew the audience would already know this piece, I wanted to show something the audience may or may not have heard. Another character that always seemed whiny and lovesick was Orsino from *Twelfth Night*. This man is just dripping with puppy dog love sweat and I find him to be hilarious. Due to the fact that he amused me so much I selected him, I will say in retrospect that I am very happy with the choice. It may have been my most relatable moment to the audience, which checks the accessible box that I also wanted to accomplish.

ORSINO:

If music be the food of love, play on;  
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,



The appetite may sicken, and so die.  
That strain again! it had a dying fall:  
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:  
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.  
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,  
That, notwithstanding thy capacity  
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,  
Of what validity and pitch so'er,  
But falls into abatement and low price,  
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy  
That it alone is high fantastical. (I.i.1-16)

After I selected Orsino, I sought out the next section of the text, which is the “solider”, but I stopped before continuing. If I wanted to make this piece of Shakespeare relatable to our modern audiences, I wanted to add in a couple other stages to the section about lovers. In Shakespeare’s day, it would make sense to go from a lover right into a solider, considering many people of the Elizabethan era did not attend school, let alone college. So I wanted to add in some more stages of lover to the piece, to make a more relatable arch to our current life cycles. I feel that we experience a lot in those teen years going into our twenties and I wanted to include some sort of maturity going forward into the play. As I had mentioned previously, Shakespeare had a massive amount of lovers from which to choose. I wanted to show true love, the first real love, the kind of person with whom we could spend forever. I wanted to show an engagement of sorts.

I found a several marriage moments, one of favorites is Portia from *The Merchant of Venice*, when she gives the ring to Bassanio, but I had plans for her later in the script. This lead me back to *Romeo and Juliet*, many would think, “how could this young teenage love be true?” Too many audience members think these two young lovers have a reputation for quick antsy love, which is unreasonable. Recently I was in a production of *Romeo and Juliet* and I couldn’t disagree more about Juliet. She is a very intelligent girl and wise beyond her years. She wants to do things the right way, which is why they marry so quickly, she wanted her “forever” to stay in one place, with one person. The monologue that she delivers to Romeo after being discovered on the balcony really brought up feelings of our modern day engagement.

JULIET:

Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face;  
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek  
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.  
Fain would I dwell on form -- fain, fain deny  
What I have spoke; but farewell compliment!  
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay';  
And I will take thy word. Yet, if thou swear'st,  
Thou mayst prove false. At lovers' perjuries,  
They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,  
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.  
Or if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,  
I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay,

So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.  
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,  
And therefore thou mayst think my havior light;  
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.  
I should have been more strange, I must confess,  
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,  
My true-love passion. Therefore pardon me,  
And not impute this yielding to light love,  
Which the dark night hath so discovered. (II.ii.934-955)

The next piece in the script was from *All's Well That Ends Well*. I love this monologue and it would be great for me as an actor to have in my repertoire and it was the most personal piece for me. Many times when people marry or date someone, you need to get some sort of approval from the family and friends of your spouse. I have experienced this multiple times with families and in particular, mothers. For some reason, I have always had relationships with the eldest sons, which is often an issue for a mother. I had to work this one to make it fit into context, but I am happy that it became part of my show.

HELENA:

Then, I confess,  
Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,  
That before you, and next unto high heaven,  
I love your son.

My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love:  
Be not offended; for it hurts not him  
That he is loved of me: I follow him not  
By any token of presumptuous suit;  
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him;  
Yet never know how that desert should be.  
I know I love in vain, strive against hope;  
Yet in this captious and intenable sieve  
I still pour in the waters of my love  
And lack not to lose still: thus, Indian-like,  
Religious in mine error, I adore  
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,  
But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,  
Let not your hate encounter with my love  
For loving where you do: but if yourself,  
Whose aged honour cites a virtuous youth,  
Did ever in so true a flame of liking  
Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian  
Was both herself and love: O, then, give pity  
To her, whose state is such that cannot choose  
But lend and give where she is sure to lose;  
That seeks not to find that her search implies,  
But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies! (I.iii.517-543)

That piece concluded the lovers' section, which brought me back to the "solider". This section of Jaques' speech made me think of one's early adulthood, having the gusto to fight for your beliefs boldly and passionately. I knew exactly what I wanted to put here, it was a piece that I had put in my previous script about breeches actresses - the, Saint Crispin's Day speech from *Henry V*. Though it's known as one of the most famous pieces of Shakespeare's literature, I really wanted to take this alpha male piece and give it a different point of view. Additionally, this was one of those characters that I would never play in my professional life, so I wanted to throw it in. It also encompassed the solider quality well, especially when being a part of something small, something that could never triumph over a massive oppressive power, but believing against all odds and fighting with everything you have for the sake of justice and honor. I think many of us fight for something at least once in our lives, but we can all remember what blind faith we had in our youth, almost thinking you are invisible, that truly anything is possible.

HENRY V:

What's he that wishes so?

My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow

To do our country loss; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,

Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;

It yearns me not if men my garments wear;

Such outward things dwell not in my desires:

But if it be a sin to covet honour,  
I am the most offending soul alive.  
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:  
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour  
As one man more, methinks, would share from me  
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!  
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,  
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart; his passport shall be made  
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
We would not die in that man's company  
That fears his fellowship to die with us.  
This day is called the feast of Crispian:  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.  
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'  
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember with advantages

What feats he did that day: then shall our names.  
Familiar in his mouth as household words  
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remember'd;  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day. (VI.iii.2253-2302)

The next section of the piece is the “justice”, which I interpreted as middle age. I haven't experienced this yet, but I took the section as a step towards wisdom with youth beginning to fade, and an influx of maturity and wisdom. From the moment that read the ages of Man speech, I knew what piece I wanted to put here, the Quality of Mercy speech from *The Merchant of Venice*. I believe this piece to be one of the best Shakespeare wrote. I love the way mercy is

depicted and this speech is meant to also speak to patience and empathy that we should have towards our fellow man.

PORTIA:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much  
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;



Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice

Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there. (VI.i.2125-2146)

Then we begin to shift into elderly years, these pieces were harder for me to decide upon. I decided to talk to my Grandma Clark about aging. She is a wife of a Deacon in the Catholic faith, and attends plenty of funerals, not only as a support for my grandfather, but also for the simple fact that her friends and family are all beginning to pass. She spoke about the adjustment in one's way of life; one gets to a point when everything is starting to slip away, and to really take in every moment of life since "Life goes by so quickly." Which made me think, how does one deal with time, in one's later years? How do you continue when you know you are getting closer to the end of your life? Grandma Clark spends a lot of her time sitting in her living room, looking out her bay window; winter is her favorite season so she likes to look at the way her trees and lawn sparkle with snow. Grandma Clark's other favorite passtime is to people watch; she especially loves watching young kiddos because they are a reminder of positivity and youth. Accordingly, I began looking for a piece associated with time. There actually is a character in *The Winter's Tale* that is called Time and while I did like this piece, it is meant as a choral piece and had some references to the plot of the play that didn't match up well with this section. Instead I selected a piece from *Henry VI* (part III) this piece was also a major acting challenge for me, because the bulk of the monologue is made up of lists, Shakespeare's lists can be some of the more difficult to act. This was a good fit and a great a challenge, it also was another male piece that I will never have the opportunity to play.

HENRY VI:

This battle fares like to the morning's war,  
When dying clouds contend with growing light,  
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,  
Can neither call it perfect day nor night.  
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea  
Forced by the tide to combat with the wind;  
Now sways it that way, like the selfsame sea  
Forced to retire by fury of the wind:  
Sometime the flood prevails, and then the wind;  
Now one the better, then another best;  
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,  
Yet neither conqueror nor conquered:  
So is the equal of this fell war.  
Here on this molehill will I sit me down.  
To whom God will, there be the victory!  
For Margaret my queen, and Clifford too,  
Havechid me from the battle; swearing both  
They prosper best of all when I am thence.  
Would I were dead! if God's good will were so;  
For what is in this world but grief and woe?  
O God! methinks it were a happy life,  
To be no better than a homely swain;  
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,

To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,  
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,  
How many make the hour full complete;  
How many hours bring about the day;  
How many days will finish up the year;  
How many years a mortal man may live.  
When this is known, then to divide the times:  
So many hours must I tend my flock;  
So many hours must I take my rest;  
So many hours must I contemplate;  
So many hours must I sport myself;  
So many days my ewes have been with young;  
So many weeks ere the poor fools will ean:  
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece:  
So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,  
Pass'd over to the end they were created,  
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.  
Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!  
Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade  
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,  
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy  
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?  
O, yes, it doth; a thousand-fold it doth.

And to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,  
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle.  
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,  
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,  
Is far beyond a prince's delicates,  
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,  
His body couched in a curious bed,  
When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him. (II.v.1103-1156)

One of the roles that I wanted to work on was Prospero from *The Tempest*. In fact he, like Henry V, was one that I had written into my original thesis on breeches actresses, and he had to stay. Also this piece really summed up my thesis, it was a celebration of the life lived, and was seen as more of death being a part of life, rather than death ending life, which I appreciate, because my biggest fear in life is dying. He also marries well with the end of Jaques' piece; that our lives are little but wonderful, and that the beginning and end of life is bookended with sleep.

PROSPERO:

You do look, my son, in a moved sort,  
As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir.  
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve 1885  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd;  
Bear with my weakness; my, brain is troubled:  
Be not disturb'd with my infirmity:  
If you be pleased, retire into my cell  
And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,  
To still my beating mind. (VI.i.1877-1894)

I had selected all my pieces and the order in which they came so I compiled everything and finished the script. The finished product follows with cuts to some of the pieces listed previously.

## AGES OF [WO]MAN

Works of Shakespeare Adapted by: Amanda Clark

*(Through the duration of the show there will be projections of people of all ages, shapes and sizes. Black and white photos projecting the world and all its players. We beginning with a quick time laps style of people in our world, the images stop when the first words are spoken. The set is minimal, mostly projected. A voice over of Jacques speech is heard.)*

VOICEOVER:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.

*(We hear the sounds of a baby crying. A mother enters the space takes her child and rocks to sleep while speaking...)*

SONNET 91:

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;  
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,  
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:  
But these particulars are not my measure,  
All these I better in one general best.  
Thy love is better than high birth to me,  
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,  
Of more delight than hawks and horses be;  
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:  
I love thee in such a sort,  
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

*(As voiceover is happening, we see a photo montage of kids.)*

VOICEOVER:

And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel,

And shining morning face, creeping like snail

Unwillingly to school.

*(We hear the sounds of a playground, kids playing. We see a little girl in a tutu, fairy wings and snow boots, playing in her imagination...)*

FAIRY:

Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,

Thorough flood, thorough fire,

I do wander everywhere,

Swifter than the moon's sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,

To dew her orbs upon the green.

The cowslips tall her pensioners be:

In their gold coats spots you see;

Those be rubies, fairy favours,

In those freckles live their savours:

I must go seek some dewdrops here

And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:

Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

VOICEOVER:

And then the lover,

Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad

Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

*(We see a montage of teenager pics, schools etc. Transition to a high school teenager, crying with a Kleenex box and iphone, playing a love song...)*

ORSINO:

If music be the food of love, play on;

Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,

The appetite may sicken, and so die.

That strain again! it had a dying fall:

O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,

That breathes upon a bank of violets,

Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:

'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.

O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,

That, notwithstanding thy capacity

Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,

Of what validity and pitch soe'er,



But falls into abatement and low price,  
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy  
That it alone is high fantastical.

*(We see a montage of college, passing of time. We hear crickets, sounds of night. Transition to a ring box...)*

JULIET:

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,  
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek  
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night  
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny  
What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!  
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'  
And I will take thy word: yet if thou swear'st,  
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries  
Then say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,  
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:  
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,  
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,  
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.  
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,  
And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light:

But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.  
I should have been more strange, I must confess,  
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,  
My true love's passion: therefore pardon me,  
And not impute this yielding to light love,  
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

*(We see a woman walk across the stage, and catch a glimpse of her future mother-in-law...)*

HELENA:

Then, I confess,  
Here on my knee, before high heaven and you  
That before you, and next unto high heaven,  
I love your son.  
My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love:  
Be not offended, for it hurts not him  
That he is lov'd of me: I follow him not  
By any token of presumptuous suit;  
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him;  
Yet never know how that desert should be.  
I know I love in vain, strive against hope;  
Yet, in this captious and intenible sieve

I still pour in the waters of my love,  
And lack not to lose still. My dearest madam,  
Let not your hate encounter with my love  
For loving where you do: but, if yourself,  
Whose aged honor cites a virtuous youth,  
then, give pity

To her, whose state is such that cannot choose  
But lend and give where she is sure to lose;

*(We see a montage of protest photos.)*

VOICEOVER:

Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth.

*(Sounds of a crowd are heard.)*

HENRY:

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow  
To do our country loss; and if to live,  
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.  
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,  
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;  
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:  
But if it be a sin to covet honour,  
I am the most offending soul alive.  
Rather proclaim it,  
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him depart; his passport shall be made  
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
We would not die in that man's company  
That fears his fellowship to die with us.  
This day is called the feast of Crispian:  
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.  
And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'  
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,

But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day: then shall our names.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remember'd;  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother;  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

*(We see a montage of news clips.)*

VOICEOVER:

And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,  
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part.

PORTIA:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice.  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.

VOICEOVER:

The sixth age shifts

Into the lean and slipper'dpantaloen,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound.

*(We hear sounds of an amusement park. Transition to and old lady sitting on a bench in the park...)*

HENRY VI:

Here on this molehill will I sit me down.  
Would I were dead! if God's good will were so;  
For what is in this world but grief and woe?  
O God! methinks it were a happy life,  
To be no better than a homely swain;  
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,  
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,  
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,  
How many make the hour full complete;  
How many hours bring about the day;  
How many days will finish up the year;  
How many years a mortal man may live.

When this is known, then to divide the times:

So many hours must I tend my flock;

So many hours must I take my rest;

So many hours must I contemplate;

So many hours must I sport myself;

So many days my ewes have been with young;

So many weeks ere the poor fools will ean:

So many years ere I shall shear the fleece:

So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,

Pass'd over to the end they were created,

Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.

Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!

VOICEOVER:

Last scene of all,

That ends this strange eventful history,

Is second childishness and mere oblivion,

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

*(We see photos of the elderly, and hear sounds of a hospital. Transition to a woman dying in her bed...)*

PROSPERO:

You do look, my son, in a moved sort,



As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,

As I foretold you, were all spirits and

Are melted into air, into thin air:

And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,

Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve 1885

And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,

Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd;

Bear with my weakness; my, brain is troubled:

Be not disturb'd with my infirmity:

If you be pleased, retire into my cell

And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,

To still my beating mind.

*(One last round or projections with a time laps of a people aging.)*

## Chapter 4 Rehearsal

After I compiled the script, it was time to begin rehearsal. Rehearsing a solo performance is unlike anything I had done before. Because you are doing almost everything yourself, from acting, directing, designing, gathering props to creating costumes, it is a different kind of discipline. The only way I would be able to have productive rehearsal on my own, was to treat the experience like any other play I have been in. I made a schedule similar to the one we receive when being a part of a production, including an off book deadline, blocking rehearsals, and technical rehearsals.

The first step was to do extensive bookwork, which usually is the first step I take when in a Shakespeare play. I need to look up words that are new to me and make notes on the language and scansion. This first step in the process is crucial; I need to be clear on what the text is saying, so I can better communicate to the audience. After I have an understanding of what the text means, then I begin to research my given circumstances. Given circumstances can be anything from time, place, age, social stature, relationships to other characters and events that have transpired within the world of the play. Given circumstances have a huge affect on how and why characters say these words, and how I as a performer will inhabit them. When researching for this piece, I did not reference the given circumstances from each play; instead, I used the text to come up with various given circumstances that were more relatable to a modern audience. Instead of being a king leading a small troop into battle, I was leading a rally on education budget cuts, and rather than being a duke listening to music from his court, I was a teenager listening to a song on my stereo. Not only did I have to tweak the context of the pieces, I also had to be specific on who I was talking to in every piece. For example, Juliet is talking to her fiancée while Henry VI was talking to her grandson. All of the people I decided to talk to had to

be specific and personal to me. Some of these people I was talking to were personal substitutions from my life, others I was able to create with my imagination. I did notice that the more specific I was with whom I was talking with, the more clear and concise the piece was.

After picking apart the text and actually knowing what I was saying and whom I was talking to, I began to put the text on its feet. I wanted to get off book right away, one thing that I have learned and confirmed for myself as an actor, is that the sooner I get off book the better. Getting the lines down early helps me to be open and available to the text. I had already made a sketch of what the set would look like; I used four periaktoi, podium, changing screen, music stand, bench, and a small chair. I figured if I began blocking right away, I would have a better take on how I wanted to perform the show, and ultimately how I would bring these moments to life.

I tried to utilize the space as much as I could, blocking entrances from the house and using the steps into the audience. I typically would work a piece, get the basic blocking, and then work each piece slowly and just play in the space. Some days were successful, other days the well was dry, and my ideas were stale, and lacked connection to actual human experience. This is where my sessions with Stacey, Nick, and George really paid off. I certainly could not have done this alone and in the future if I were to do a solo performance and it were financially viable, I would hire a director. Actors really need to be out of their head, and I personally spend a lot of time in there when devising a piece, so much so, that that part of my brain governed over most of my rehearsals. Stacey, Nick, and George really helped out with my intention and experience that I was sharing, not thinking so much about what it looked like and more on what it felt like.

For instance, Stacey gave me numerous notes on what experience I was having personally to the text. If I had a specific experience that I was sharing then I wouldn't have to worry if the audience understood, they would understand a mutual experience. Early in my training, I thought my intellectual understanding of the text would prove I am a great actor and that I deserved to be in graduate school. Not until this experience did the concept of utilizing my emotions really start to click for me. George often echoed the same notes, telling me that I needed to make the pieces more specific and personal to me. If I could figure that out, the text would serve me better. I took these notes and tried my best to apply them to my work, but I think these notes dropped in a little late and I didn't have the specificity that was required for the text. Also with the way this particular assignment is designed, you have so many aspects to focus on, and my acting was honestly the last thing I thought about.

After getting everything blocked and memorized, I then started to do run the show, I decided that the sections of Jaques' speech would be voiceovers to help me transition from age to age. While the voiceovers would play, I would project images of our current society to echo the themes of the monologue. These images not only showed the age I was in, but there were also images of the context in which I set the pieces. The soldier had images of a rally; the justice had images of political propaganda and the elderly had images of a park. I think that was a nice segue for the piece and helped the audience stay in the play during transitions. I also added some tech elements of sound to help add to what atmosphere I was setting. For instance, the Juliet piece was set by a lake at night, so I added in the sounds of cicadas and crickets and for *Henry VI* I added in sound of birds, since this took place in a park.

I then started thinking of what props I would need, I gathered various items that helped support the shifts in age. I made a pink tutu for my child piece, a ring box for Juliet, various

shawls for my elderly monologues, a cane and glasses. I kept the rest of my costume very simple; leggings and a tee shirt in neutral colors. Then, I began to think of lighting, which I kept simple with a general wash. I have never directed before and I was on stage, so it was challenging to come up with a lighting technique for my piece. Thankfully, George was a huge help in this and was my outside eye for lighting. The goal for my tech was to keep everything as simple as possible, and let the text do all the work. After weeks of planning and rehearsing I felt ready to take this piece into performance, and was excited to share the work I had done.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

I had the pleasure of sharing the performance date with my classmates Amar Atkins and Addie Barnhart. Nerves were really high and my anxiety level was greater than it had been for past performances. I felt that I was giving birth to a project that I had spent all of my time on and I was nervous to have my mentors and peers judge it. The pre-show was most the awkward part of the experience. I was warming up for the show alone. I like to be a part of theatre because I can work with people, solo performing is a completely different beast and for the first time I really felt the importance of the audience's energy.

The audience makes a huge difference in the energy of how the show is played and I have felt this before, but when you are the only thing entertaining them, it is an entirely different process. When I was devising my show, many times my mentors and guest artists kept asking me, "who is the audience in this moment, what role do they play?" I hadn't thought of this before. I always thought of the audience as people of my community who graciously have shared their time with me, but when you are performing alone, you realize that your scene partner is the audience. They are vital to the success of your show and you must treat them as such. They can give you the fuel you need to pursue the objectives you have set out for yourself in the play. I am glad that I had this opportunity to feel this sensation and have a new point of view of the audience and take into account what they have to offer in the performing process.

All in all, I will say that I do not intend to create more solo performance work, though this experience is one that I feel all actors should go through. It shows if you are willing to devise, produce and perform your own work. For actors this is essential, we must make our own opportunities and mold the career we desire. Looking back on this, I think I did a pretty good

job, but I would have liked to have a better grasp on my relationship to the audience. I think the acting overall served its purpose, but I do not feel that this was the culmination of my training, nor do I think this was some of my best work. I did realize, that my point of view on my acting changed quite a bit. I really started to feel what it was like to be fully doing and feeling my work and when I wasn't. This has been a bigger leap forward in my acting training because I have gotten past some technical aspects of my work and now I am starting to trust the work I have done. I am onto the next goal of being fully present and fully engaged in every moment of the work.

Regardless of this not being my best acting work, I do think I obtained most of the objectives I had set out for myself. I created an accessible and relatable experience with Shakespeare's text, that bent gender expectations and I celebrated the cycle of life. When I asked audience members what they thought of the show, I was happy to hear that everyone understood what I was saying. My main feedback was that people liked experiencing Shakespeare in a modern context, which made it more relatable to them. This was a huge payoff and made me think that perhaps people really do like Shakespeare, they just haven't found out yet.

I don't see myself performing this piece again, but I wouldn't be opposed to possible grant writing to send the show out to schools. The show is short, which is great for students and the technical elements are light, so it wouldn't be a struggle to perform the show in various conditions. Thoughts for the future, but for now, no foreseeable plans for the *Ages of [Wo]Man*. I am glad I took on the challenge, I grew a lot on this journey and I will always hold it dear to my heart.

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## Vita

Amanda Jane Clark was born in 1987, in Thornton, Colorado. She received her primary education at Nativity of Our Lord Catholic School in Broomfield, Colorado. She completed her secondary education at Broomfield High School, also in Broomfield, Colorado. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree with an emphasis in performing form the University of Northern Colorado, in Greeley, Colorado in August of 2009. She is a candidate for the Master of Fine Arts degree, with an emphasis in Acting Performance from the Louisiana State University, May 2015