

2024 JOHN BELL SCHOLARSHIP MONOLOGUE LIST



SHAKESPEARE
BELL

Twelfth Night (2023)
Photo: Brett Boardman
Actor: Tomáš Kantor

KING LEAR

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Goneril is the eldest daughter of the ageing King Lear, who has decided to divide his kingdom amongst his daughters. King Lear has come to visit Goneril and brought a bunch of rowdy knights to stay at her house. Infuriated with her father, Goneril hatches a plan to get rid of King Lear's entourage and take more power for herself and her sister, Regan. In this monologue, Goneril instructs her steward, Oswald, to do her bidding.

GONERIL

By day and night he wrongs me. Every hour
 He flashes into one gross crime or other
 That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.
 His knights grow riotous and himself upbraids us
 On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
 I will not speak with him; say I am sick.
 If you come slack of former services
 You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.
 Put on what weary negligence you please,
 You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question.
 If he dislike it, let him to my sister,
 Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,
 Not to be overruled. Idle old man,
 That still would manage those authorities
 That he hath given away. Now by my life
 Old fools are babes again and must be used
 With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.
 Remember what I have said.
 And let his knights have colder looks among you,
 What grows of it no matter; advise your fellows so.
 I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
 That I may speak. I'll write straight to my sister
 To hold my very course. Go, prepare for dinner.

Upbraids – finds fault with, scolds

Trifle – small token, insignificant thing

Come slack of – slacken, reduce

Checks – reprimands, telling off

Hold my very course – Follow the same plan as me

KING LEAR

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Edmund, the illegitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester, is not entitled to inherit the land, title, privileges, and money from his father due to his birth status. Instead, these inheritances will go to his half-brother Edgar, who is the 'legitimate' son of the Earl of Gloucester and his wife. Here, Edmund shares his frustration at how he is treated differently than his brother, and tells the audience of his plan to better his circumstances.

EDMUND

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I
 Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me?
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
 Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
 When my dimensions are as well compact,
 My mind as generous, and my shape as true
 As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
 With base? With baseness, bastardy? Base, base?
 Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
 More composition and fierce quality
 Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
 Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops
 Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
 As to the legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'!
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
 Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper:
 Now gods, stand up for bastards!

Plague – affliction, curse

Moonshines – Months

Base – low, unworthy

Bastard – born out of wedlock and unable to inherit

Fops – fools

AS YOU LIKE IT ACT 3, SCENE 5

Phebe (pronounced as 'Phoebe'), a young shepherdess, shuns the affections of Silvius, a young shepherd, who loves her devotedly. Rosalind enters, disguised as a young man named Ganymede, and admonishes Phebe for her cruel treatment of Silvius. Phebe is instantly captivated by Ganymede, and at the same annoyed by his rude behaviour. Here Phebe talks to Silvius about her mixed feelings for this new stranger.

PHEBE

Think not I love him, though I ask for him.
'Tis but a peevish boy – yet he talks well.
But what care I for words? Yet words do well
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.
It is a pretty youth – not very pretty –
But sure he's proud, and yet his pride becomes him.
He'll make a proper man. The best thing in him
Is his complexion; and faster than his tongue
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.
He is not very tall, yet for his years he's tall.
His leg is but so so, and yet 'tis well.
There was a pretty redness in his lip,
A little riper and more lusty red
Than that mixed in his cheek; 'twas just the difference
Between the constant red and mingled damask.
There be some women, Silvius, had they marked him
In parcels as I did, would have gone near
To fall in love with him; but for my part
I love him not, nor hate him not; and yet
I have more cause to hate him than to love him:
For what had he to do to chide at me?
He said mine eyes were black and my hair black,
And, now I am remembered, scorned at me:
I marvel why I answered not again.
But that's all one. Omittance is no quittance.
I'll write to him a very taunting letter,
And thou shalt bear it, wilt thou, Silvius?

Peevish – silly, foolish

Damask – light red/pink, a colour of rose

In parcels – in detail, particular, specific points

Omittance – leaving something out, forgetting something

KING LEAR

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Edgar is the legitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester. His half-brother Edmund has double crossed him, and persuaded their father that Edgar is a traitor. Edgar has fled, narrowly escaping the Earl of Gloucester's pursuing men. Here he tells the audience his plan to take the disguise of a poor beggar so as not to be discovered by the hunt.

EDGAR

I heard myself proclaimed,
 And by the happy hollow of a tree
 Escaped the hunt. No port is free, no place
 That guard and most unusual vigilance
 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may scape,
 I will preserve myself; and am bethought
 To take the basest and most poorest shape
 That ever penury, in contempt of man,
 Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,
 Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,
 And with presented nakedness outface
 The winds and persecutions of the sky.
 The country gives me proof and precedent
 Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
 Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
 And with this horrible object, from low farms,
 Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills,
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
 Enforce their charity. 'Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom!'
 That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

Proclaimed - publicly declared (in this case, as an outlaw)

Penury - the state of being very poor, extreme poverty

Sheepcote - a building where sheep shelter

Bedlam - mad, crazed, lunatic

Turlygod - a nonsense name used by Edgar when he is pretending to be mad

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

ACT 4, SCENE 1

Portia, disguised as a judge, has come to Venice to argue the case against Shylock's claim to a pound of Antonio's flesh. In the middle of the courtroom scene Shylock asks why he should be merciful. The enigmatic Portia responds by emphasising the benefits of mercy for both the giver and receiver.

PORTIA

The quality of mercy is not strained,
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.

Sceptre – ornamental staff used by rulers as a symbol of sovereignty

Temporal – secular, worldly

Salvation – the process of being saved, in Christianity meaning belief in Christ will save human beings from sin and its consequences

Mitigate – lessen the effect of

HENRY IV PART 1

ACT 1, SCENE 2

When we first meet the young Prince Hal (Henry), he is partying with his friends in the pub. Much to the disappointment of his father, the king, this is not appropriate behaviour for the heir to the throne. Alone with the audience, Hal shares that this is all part of his plan, that he is only pretending to be irresponsible and careless, and at the right moment, Hal plans to reveal his true nature, thus debunking the false impressions people have of him.

PRINCE HENRY

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That, when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So, when this loose behaviour I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

Unyoked – unrestrained, unbridled

Reformation – significant change and improvement, change for the better

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

ACT 2, SCENE 1 [EDITED]

Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, is fighting with her husband, King Oberon. They have been quarrelling over a changeling boy, each of them wanting the child for their own and refusing to back down. Here, Titania explains that their constant fighting has had an impact on the natural world. The environment is in turmoil, as is their relationship.

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy;
 And never, since the middle summer's spring,
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
 By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
 Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
 As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
 Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
 Have every pelting river made so proud
 That they have overborne their continents.
 The human mortals want their winter cheer:
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest.
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound,
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter: the spring, the summer,
 The childing autumn, angry winter, change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which:
 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension;
 We are their parents and original.

Forgeries – deceit, deception, lies

Margent – border

Overborne – overcome, overpowered

Rheumatic – relating to rheumatism, a disease that causes inflammation of the joints

Wonted liveries – usual clothing/uniform

Distemperature – a disordered atmospheric state, excess of heat or cold

Progeny – descendent, offspring

Dissension – disagreement

MACBETH

ACT 2, SCENE 1 (EDITED)

Macbeth, having made the decision to kill King Duncan, is immediately wracked with guilt. His imagination leads him to see a floating dagger in front of him, pointing towards the very place that Duncan lies asleep.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
 As this which now I draw.
 Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
 Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,
 And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
 Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
 It is the bloody business which informs
 Thus to mine eyes. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
 And take the present horror from the time,
 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

[A bell rings]

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
 Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
 That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.

Heat-oppressed – hot and fevered, as if delirious

Palpable – able to be touched or felt, a physical thing

Marshall'st – to direct or lead

Dudgeon – the handle of a dagger

Prate – blab, chat idly

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

ACT 4, SCENE 1

In the forest, Bottom wakes up from a deep sleep, confused. He vaguely remembers that he had the head of a donkey and that the Queen of the Fairies was madly in love with him. But now he is all alone – no donkey ears, no fairies, and his friends are nowhere to be found. Was it all a dream, or was it real? Undeterred, Bottom resolves to find his friends and turn his “dream” into a most spectacular performance.

BOTTOM

[Awaking] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, ‘Most fair Pyramus.’ Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God’s my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was – there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had, but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called Bottom’s Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

God’s my life – an expression of exasperation

Expound – explain the meaning of

Patched – wearing a jester’s multicoloured patchwork costume

Peradventure – perhaps, maybe

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

ACT 1, SCENE 1 [EDITED]

Hermia plans to run away to the forest in secret with her boyfriend, Lysander. They share their plans with Hermia's best friend, Helena, and wish her good luck with Demetrius, the man Helena loves (yet who is more interested in Hermia). Once alone, Helena laments the situation and reflects on her own unhappiness in love.

HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!
 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she,
 But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
 He will not know what all but he do know;
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
 So I, admiring of his qualities.
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity:
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind;
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste:
 Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
 For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
 Then to the wood will he tomorrow night
 Pursue her, and for this intelligence
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
 To have his sight thither and back again.

Errs – makes a mistake

Transpose – to change or alter

Ere – before

Eyne – eyes