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## Local playwright publishes Shakespeare adaptations

By AMANDA LEIDIG

Staff Reporter

Lopez islander and playwright Richard Carter has been involved in theater all of his life. You could say it's his passion — it's also his life's work.

Now, Carter has self-published three adaptations of William **Shakespeare's** plays: "As You Like It," "The Taming of the Shrew" and "The Comedy of Errors."

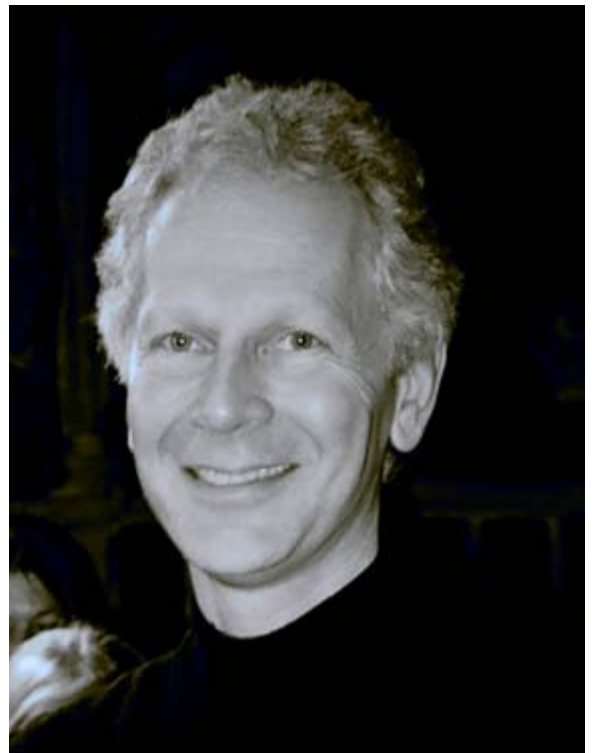
Several years ago, Carter co-founded the Community **Shakespeare** Company, which has become well known for providing Lopez with quality Elizabethan plays. CSC has expanded over the years and now does productions acted by younger children (third- to seventh-graders) and secondary-age kids (seventh- to 12th-graders).

After requests from teachers and directors, Carter self-published his first three adaptations and is currently picking the fourth. His scripts are now available almost everywhere; in fact, they are even being used in Japan. He will write the next script for the upcoming November 2006 CSC production. The play he will adapt has not yet been determined, but it will be another **Shakespeare** comedy.

While directing many of the early CSC plays, Carter used adaptations of **Shakespeare** written by local second-grade teacher Lois Burdett. However, he found his young actors and actresses were quickly outgrowing those adaptations, which were written in a narrative style. Carter also found that there really weren't any versions to be found between the second-grade level and the original Elizabethan language. So, he simply began adapting the plays himself, writing the scripts for his young actors and actresses.

But really, that's nothing new for this playwright — who graduated from Vassar College in 1980 and then went on to earn his Masters of Fine Arts in playwriting from the University of Washington.

Carter, in fact, wrote a play for his undergraduate thesis. That play, "Blood and Iron," won Seattle's Jumpstart New Play Competition and went on to be presented on the London stage.



Richard Carter

contributed photo

The next one he wrote, "Winds of the Morning," was staged at the 1997 Seattle Fringe Festival and then was selected to inaugurate the 2000 Wooden Boat Festival in Port Townsend.

"I've tried, as a playwright, to be very respectful (of **Shakespeare's** work)," said Carter. He does, however, take liberties with characters, sometimes adding minor roles if there are more kids in his production than characters. That's not to say there will ever be two Juliets in one of Carter's adaptations, but he might add a widow or stable hand to the script.

He has also modernized some of the language and jokes. And the kids have readily taken to his scripts.

"All of a sudden children are inspired to do **Shakespeare**, rather than intimidated by it," said Carter. Furthermore, his adaptations help kids transition to the original Elizabethan language — which, although initially intimidating, is not difficult to understand.

All of the adaptations have a familiar rhythm, and follow the original story lines. "For me, the text is like music," said Carter, who reads his adaptations cover to cover with his actors and actresses. He'll make changes, even at that point, if he finds the words don't roll off the tongue like they should.

Carter asks for, and listens to, the opinions of his cast. "Their opinions matter and the ease with which they can (say the lines) matters," he said.

"I'm convinced that these adaptations have helped students here love **Shakespeare**," said Carter, who added that introducing the famous playwright's work to kids wasn't the most important aspect. "It's that they've learned, through the process, something beautiful."

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