

Shakespeare for Kids

By Leta Currie Marshall
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Richard Carter earned his MFA in playwriting from the University of Washington, and saw his play *Blood and Iron* produced on the London stage. On Lopez, the award-winning author is better known as the Artistic Director of the not-for-profit Community Shakespeare Company, and for the scaled-down scripts he creates for young actors.

Carter's adaptations of *A Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *As you Like It* are now available to the world, thanks to a publishing outlet known as print-on-demand. Written in rhyming couplets, Community Shakespeare Company Editions scripts are easy to memorize even for eight-year-olds, while the sparkling wit and a sprinkling of contemporary language makes them fun for grown-ups too.

Carter wanted to share this unique format that has made Shakespeare accessible and fun for everyone from grade three on up. When he first directed Lopez schoolkids in *Twelfth Night* in 1999, he used an adaptation by Ontario author Lois Burdett. With her blessing, he started writing his own adaptations to use as a stepping stone between her scripts for younger students and Shakespeare's originals with their challenging Elizabethan English. His scripts are just right, he said, for teachers looking for a "user-friendly" way to introduce Shakespeare to kids, or for a fun play for their students to perform. The scripts are ideal for middle schoolers, he said.

With three tried-and-true scripts in hand, Carter asked his daughter, who works for a publishing company in New York, how he might go about selling them. She recommended self-publishing and suggested a few names. He called the first one on the list, liked the connection, and signed on with them. The internet company, i-universe, handles printing, online sales, shipping, and promotion. The scripts sell for



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\$9.95 and Carter receives a fourth of the total. An ISBN number on each book allows him to track sales; he hopes that eventually he'll be able to present his works to a 'real' publisher and say, "Look how many I sold this way."

He worked with Ann Palmer, who created and maintains the Community Shakespeare Company (CSC) website, to format the scripts and get them ready for publishing. Notice went up on the CSC website late last fall, and by January teachers were contacting Carter to ask about the scripts. Last week he received an inquiry from a teacher in Japan.

Carter said he hopes the internet exposure for his books will lead to more opportunities.

"I really want to make money in this business," he said. "If each person who reads this article will tell one other person...spread the word."

He received his personal copies last week, and said opening boxes of books that have his name printed on the covers was "a good feeling. I recommend it!"

Carter is currently planning the autumn 2006 CSC productions and deciding which play to adapt next. At the same time, he's working hard to finish a novel for young people; an agent in New York is waiting to read the manuscript.

"I'm having the time of my life," he said.

For more information, visit the CSC web page at: www.communityshakespeare.org
