

Shakeshorts and the Shakeshorts Team

Thank you for your interest in Shakeshorts! Here is a little info sheet to give you a better idea of who we are and what we do.

What is Shakeshorts?

Shakeshorts is a series of short adaptations of Shakespeare plays and other works of literature intended to serve as an introduction to Shakespeare or as a study aid for students preparing for exams. Each play is designed to remove any preconceived barriers to accessing and understanding Shakespeare by retaining a large part of the original text, and using modern day speech to comment, highlight and joke about the characters, themes and plot.



The plays were written for an audience of children up to 15 years old and each 40-minute piece is accompanied by an optional workshop that allows the students to explore the world of the play in a deeper manner, along with suggested lesson plans and notes for teachers. These resources and workshops were created in consultation with an education professional, to ensure that “artistry meets outcomes.” In other words to ensure that the play, whilst being artistically outstanding, also meets its educational goals.

Over the years, we've widened our scope to include other works of literature that were not written by Shakespeare.

Shakeshorts was originally commissioned for ŽiguŽajg International Arts Festival for Children & Young People in 2016. The original production was nominated for a National Arts Award and the Shakeshorts brand has grown to include a repertoire of 5 productions with 2 more in

development. The shows have to date been enjoyed by thousands of students in person and online (during the pandemic).



Shakeshorts plays on offer to date are:

- Macbeth*
- Merchant of Venice*
- A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- Animal Farm*
- Frankenstein*



The Shakeshorts Ethos: Bringing fun, laughter and learning to Shakespeare and great works of literature.

Placing ourselves in the shoes of a student, faced with a Shakespeare text for the first time, grappling with the language (bearing in mind English may not be their first language), trying to make sense of anything within the pages of the book, trying to visualise the play, connect the dots, get a sense of the plot - it's overwhelming for most people.



By connecting with the students through humour brought about by the play, involving them in the production (they are active participants, not passive watchers), using a mixture of modern language and Shakespeare's original text, we can clear away the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that may restrict their enjoyment and study of the play. Students can access the play, remember it affectionately (because they had a good time) and use our production to relate to the actual text when reading and writing about it.

The positive effects of active participation in learning are well documented in scholarly studies (a simple Google search reveals a trove of examples).

Similarly, research has shown that "humour produces psychological and physiological benefits that help students learn" (<https://www.apa.org/monitor/jun06/learning>).

"Humour activates the brain's dopamine reward system, stimulating goal-oriented motivation and long-term memory, which means that humour can improve retention in students of all ages." (<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/laughter-learning-humor-boosts-retention-sarah-henderson>).

That is why Shakeshorts productions are constantly interactive and constantly funny. That allows us to slip the information that needs to be retained into the content, so that the student engaging with the work will learn, pretty much effortlessly, whilst also enjoying themselves.



“Artistry meets Outcomes.” The Educational Aspect of Shakeshorts

In the creation of each show, we studied the Learning Outcomes Framework for the target audience, and built into the work specifically designed components that help achieve the relevant learning outcomes across different subject areas.

Each Shakeshorts production has an optional workshop and teachers resource pack available to the schools. These are intended to supplement the experience the students had when the show visited their school, to help encourage discussion, and further cement their knowledge of themes, plot, characters and language in the play.



The resource pack and workshops were designed in close collaboration with a Maltese teacher who has international experience and who now works as a Deputy Headteacher and Curriculum Co-Ordinator. They were created to fulfil the Learning Outcomes Framework for the target audience.

By combining a thoughtful and curriculum-led approach to the work and wrapping it up in highly-effective learning techniques, we are able to innovatively bring out the curricular themes through a unique, impactful artistic experience.



The Shakeshorts Team

Chris Dingli - Writer, Producer, Director, Performer

Colleen Emily Genovese - Performer, Company Manager

Gianluca Mifsud - Performer

Alex Weenink - Performer, Company Manager

Rebecca Darmanin - Performer

Erika Dingli - Educational Consultant

Francesca Lanzon - Art Director (Animal Farm)





www.shakeshorts.com

